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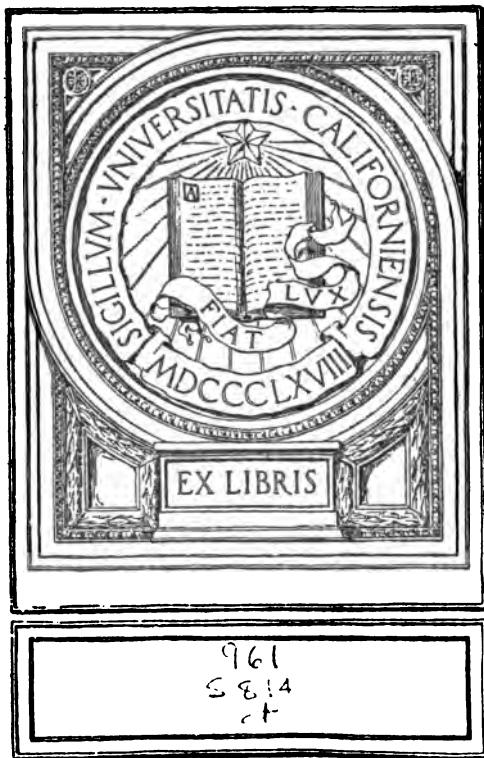
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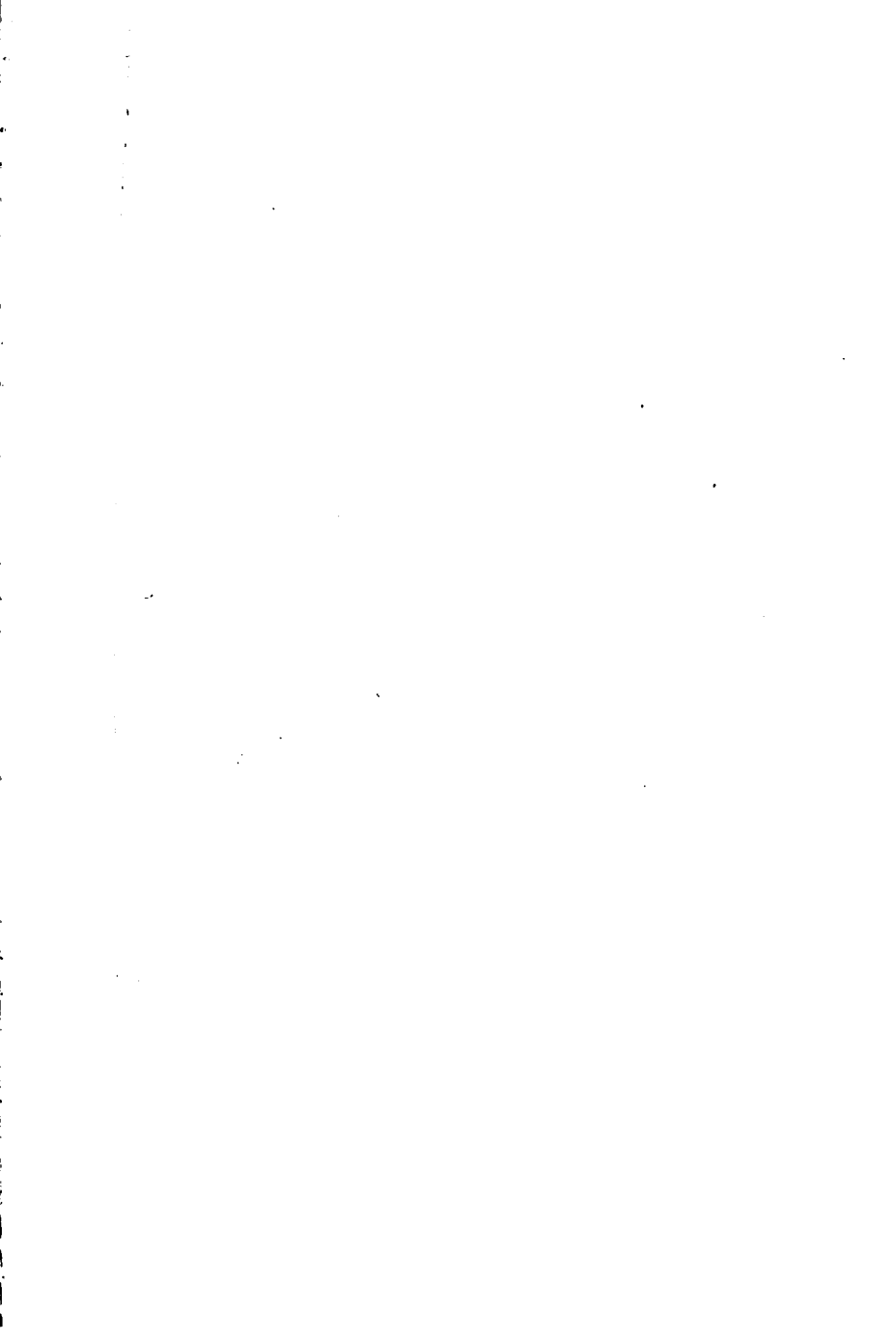
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STORM







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Figure 1. The effect of the concentration of the *Agrobacterium* suspension on the transformation efficiency of *Agrobacterium* strains.



[See p. 28]

**TWO FIGURES STOOD UP NEAR THE WHEEL IN THE STERN—DEDOS AND THE
HANDKERCHIEF LADY'S GIRL**

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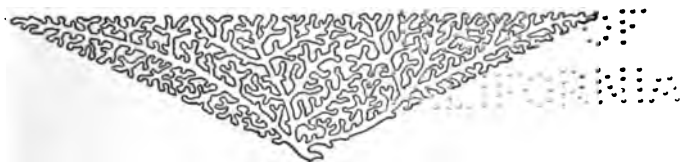
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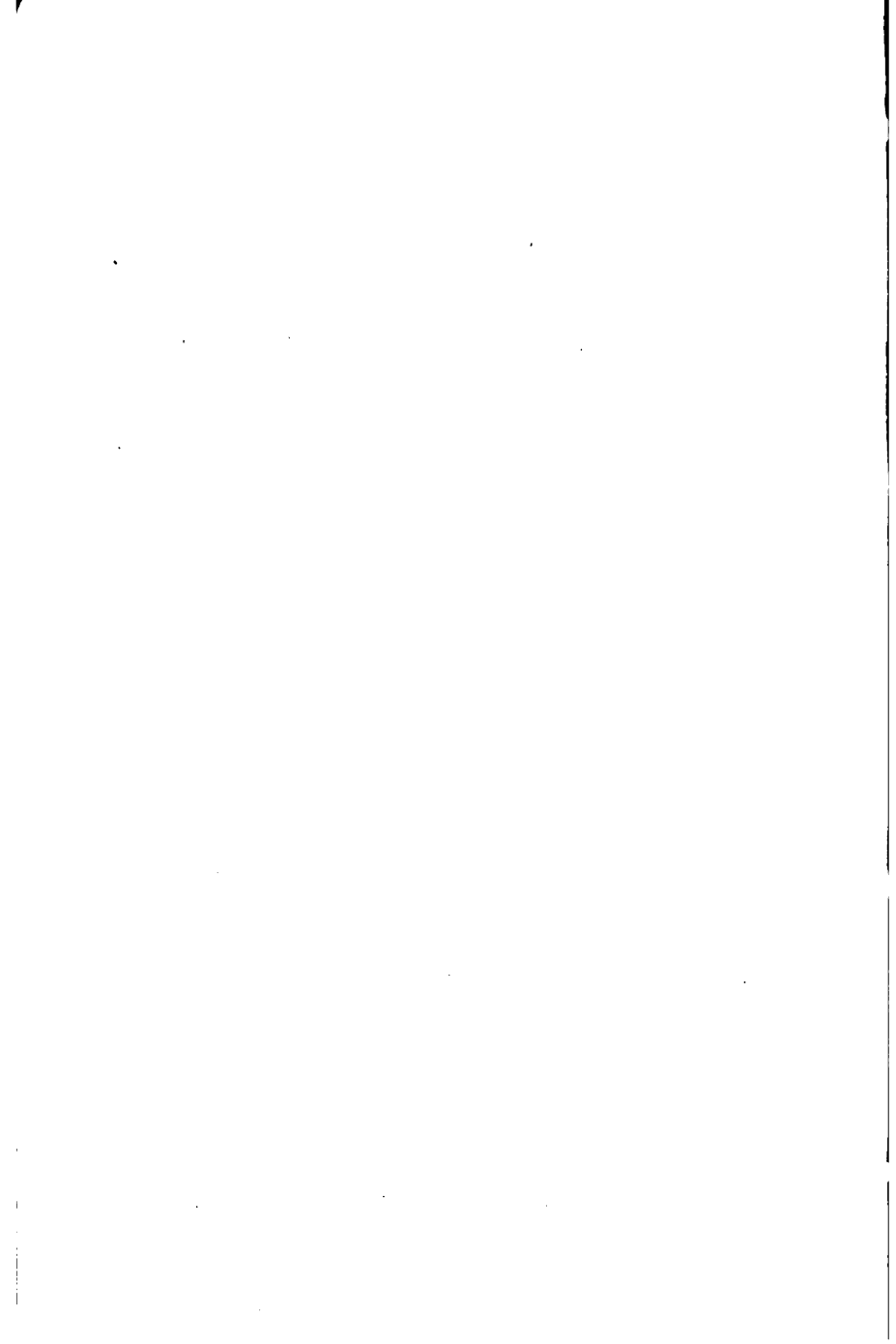
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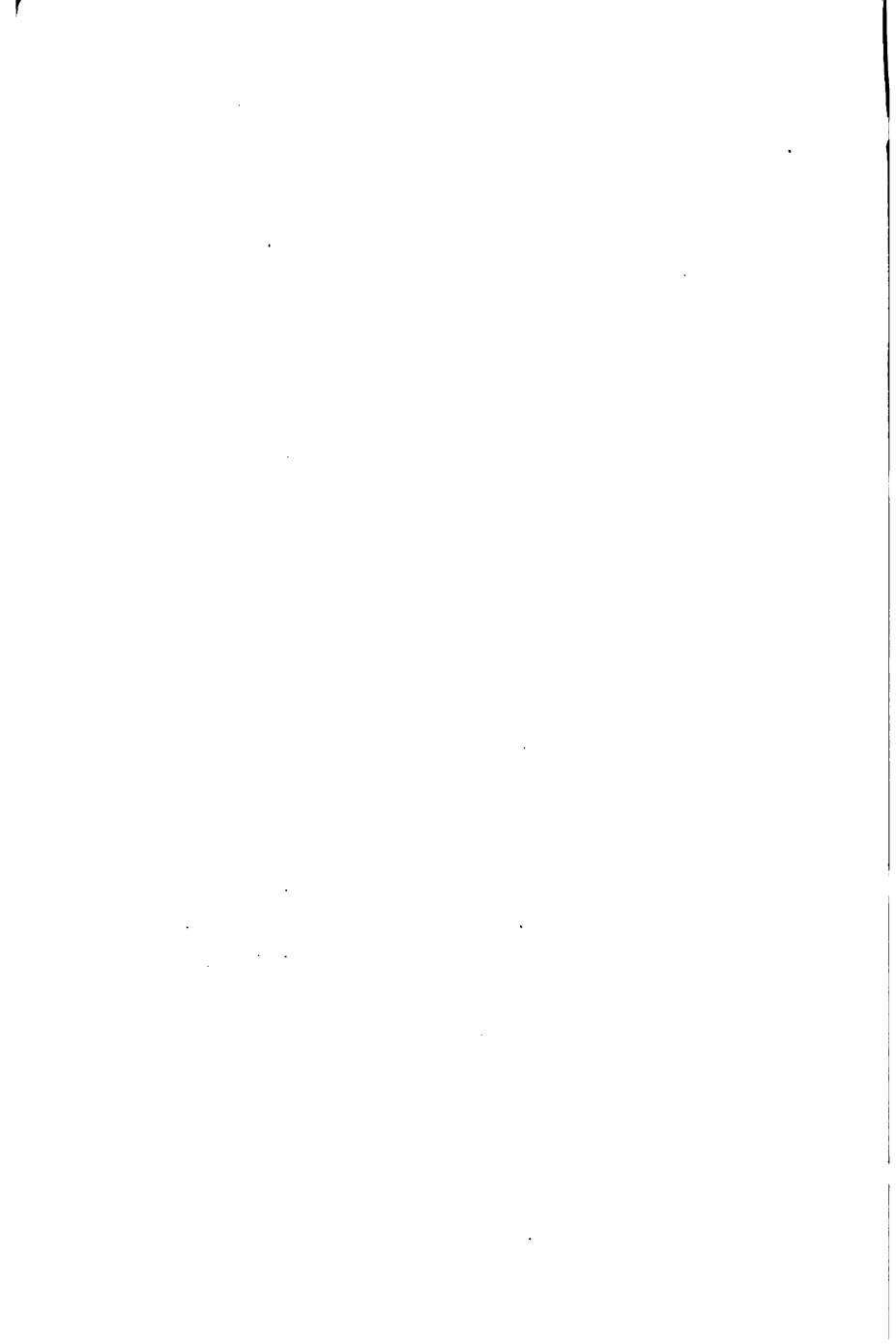
TO
W. F. S.

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STORM

I

ABOUT DEDOS

THE little house where I was born, and in which I spent the earlier years of my life, stands about a hundred feet back from the beach and a little more than a mile down-shore from Old Harbor. What we always knew as the Creek runs in there, with plenty of water, even at low tide, to float my father's dories; and the flawless yellow face of a dune used to stand up behind the house, sheltering us from the "northerlies" that pick the scud from the Atlantic, a mile back across the Neck, and spatter it in the bay at our front door. My father and mother still live in the house, but the dune has shifted to the westward and it is colder there on a winter night.

My father and mother came from the Azores—the Western Islands we call them—so they had a recollection of green country, but we children knew nothing but the water and the sand and the gray, crouching woods that run like a thread of marrow through the internal passages of the Cape.

THE VINDICATED STORM

Strangely enough, my most vivid remembrance of the water is not from any of its wilder moods, but pictured with the tide out at evening, reflecting the face of the western sky, flat, garish-colored, silent, with a spur of mute fire reaching out at us along the surface of the Creek.

The dunes were the magic land, full of shifting shadows, and deceptive, where a little covey of beach-plums made themselves out a far-away and impenetrable forest, especially when the mist came inland, and a footprint in the sand across a hollow appeared a vast convulsion of nature at the other end of a day's journey. And one felt the dunes always moving, rising up out of the sea, marching silently across the Neck, and advancing upon the little house. I can remember the spring when the sand ate up a pear-tree my father brought from the Islands.

From the little house one may look straight along the State Road to the westward into Old Harbor, a mile up-shore. In the early autumn the sun goes down into the very core of the town. When there is just enough mist in the air, the red disk, touching the tower of the Congregational Church, seems to set off a conspired train, and immediately all the huddled roofs and trees and masts and wharves of Old Harbor are caught up and overwhelmed in a tremendous crimson destruction.

It was on an evening of my tenth year that I saw my mother's cousin coming along the State Road, growing and blackening against the flare behind like a ponderous survivor, fleeing leisurely.

STORM

I knew he was coming to talk with my father, who was painting a dory thwart in the fish-shed, so there I went and stowed myself away in a discreet corner.

Dedos was a man of enormous girth. When he came into the shed and sat down on a pile of old sail-cloth he brought to my mind the picture of a pyramid in a book they gave me at Old Harbor school—but very solemn and grotesque and snapping his fingers. He was forever snapping those huge fingers of his, and it was only in after years that I learned that “Dedos,” our Portuguese for “fingers,” was not his real name, for one never heard any other in Old Harbor. Every one knew Dedos as a comical fellow, and, though he seldom spoke, and then with a hesitating gravity, one always roared at him.

Now he sat for some time in silence, pyramid-wise, watching my father’s brush. When he spoke, it was with a grotesque embarrassment.

“I—I’ve took the *Angie*,” he exploded, with something desperate in his wide face.

“Debil,” my father muttered, shaking his head. “Dat one debil boat. You one beeg fool I t’eenk. You no git nobody go weeth you in dat boat, Ded’s.”

Dedos said no more, only sat lumped upon himself in extravagant trouble while my father fell to work again. Because I was so young I filled in the pause with a doggerel couplet I had heard in Old Harbor streets so long as I could remember.

Angie is a scow;
Better sink her now.

I had hardly come to the last word when the back of my father’s hand sent me rolling into a heap of

STORM

tarred weir-twine. When I had gotten my small frame on its proper end once more he was still swearing his pregnant Island oaths, and through the open doorway I could see Dedos lumbering away, his fingers snapping aimlessly and his big head sunk forward as though in comical determination to butt out the last vestiges of the western fire.

The fair name of a woman may be a frail thing, but the fair name of a ship is a frailer thing. It is mostly the women that whisper about women (at least it was so in Old Harbor and when I was a boy of ten), and the old men that whisper about ships. I do not mean that they actually whisper—those old men sitting in their rockers on the gray wharves along all the spacious yellow beach—but the effect is of a vast aggregate of little voices, passing judgment.

The little voices damned the *Angie* before ever her keel was wet. The *Angie's* builder, up Dorchester way, had sent down a "man-killer" once before, and the whispering gossip mulled and mulled, and the new sloop would be a "bad boat"—that was the verdict of the little voices. She had no witness, no counsel; she herself was not even sitting on the flat circle within the canted yellow ring from which she was being judged, but there she was damned and there she remained damned.

A man killed himself in her cabin on the trip from the yards. After that no one would ship in her; she lay idle at her moorings for months at a time, gathering disrepute and disrepute, so familiar a fixture of my childhood that I should not recall

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her existence at all had she not helped to make one of those pictures which stand in my memory.

Dedos *was* a fool to take the *Angie*. He used to emerge from the crimson destruction of an evening and sit on the sail-cloth in the shed, the same droll pyramid of trouble. And every evening the crescendo of the popping fingers led up to the same explosive phrase: "I ain't got nobody yet—an' the mack'ral's goin' fast—fast."

I used to watch Dedos's fingers with a boundless awe. Try as I might, and with his accomplishments always in eye, it was but a poor commotion I could raise between my small thumb and forefinger.

It was perhaps two weeks after Dedos took the *Angie* that those popping fingers ceased to qualify the man in my eyes, and he was suddenly thrust forward upon my stage, clothed in the habiliments of romance. And romance is a sweeping and terrible thing to a boy of ten.

I was out that afternoon in the back country on the affairs of a pirate cave I had lately finished on the Second Ridge, near Paul Dyer's fields. I was dragging along a fragment of an old sheet-iron stove as a start toward cave-furnishing, and I was suffering in spirit—you may believe it or not—because the world was so red. There is no other place in the world so red as the Cape when the high-bush blueberries turn.

There is a spot beyond the fields, a little hollow shut away from the water and the sand, which might be the very inner temple of the fire-god, it is so crowded with still flame. It was here that I

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came upon a girl, picking sprays from the bushes. I had never seen this girl before, but beyond that strangeness there was another and deep strangeness I could only sense vaguely and not understand at all. She looked pale and fragile, a ghost of a girl with pallid hair—but this was the fault of the red world. I wondered why she threw the sprays aside as fast as she gathered them, and why she seemed frightened and abashed at me.

Then came to my ears a familiar sound, a rhythmic popping of fingers, and there was Dedos, a dun-colored pyramid looming from the tapestry up-hill. A tremendous solemnity was written on his face, and no god of stone was ever more apart from the world than Dedos.

I stood there for a moment matching the blueberry bushes with my embarrassment. Then I turned and ran, leaving the stove behind, not embarrassed, but important as one who should go along the front street announcing that I had seen Dedos with a *girl*.

The distinction was never to be realized, however. I found my mother in the kitchen at home, mending an old oil-jacket of my father's. Outside, on the little wharf over the edge of the Creek, my father was talking with a gentleman whom I remembered to have seen more than once before in our yard. He was not a large man, but he had a large way of looking about him—a satisfied substantiality about the wrinkles which radiated from the corners of his eyes that gave me a curious feeling that the little house and the yard and the wharf and Creek and my father all belonged to him. Whether they did

STORM

or not I cannot say, but this Mr. Snow was Old Harbor's rich man, a sea-captain in the China trade, retired.

Once he had stopped at our house, on his way back from Truro along the State Road. In the back seat of the wagon I had seen a baby girl with fuzzy gold-brown hair sitting beside an angular and fluttering female in tight black. I remember that I was immensely awed by the state in which the expedition moved.

I did not pay him much attention now, however, but made haste to test the effect of my tremendous news upon my mother.

"I seen Dedos with a girl," I pronounced.

"W'at girl was eet, Zhoe?"

"I never seen her before."

My mother's attention shifted from the oil-jacket.

"W'at deed she look lek, Zhoe?"

I tried to tell her the little I could remember, and my little was enough to bring her down upon me in a torrent of whispered passion which one who did not know her would have taken for genuine rage.

"Don' you tell nobody, Zhoe," she commanded, one finger before her lips and her eyes uneasily upon Mr. Snow outside. "Don' you tell nobody. An' don' you go near dat girl, Zhoe. Do you hear your mudder, Zhoe?"

"Why for, mother?"

"Zhoe—dat's the Han'k'chief Lady's girl."

And so was the cloak of romance thrown over my mother's cousin.

Was there an Old Harbor child in my day of

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youth who did not know about the Handkerchief Lady? Most of us had seen her at one time or another slipping through the edges of the town at twilight or in the very early morning, and I for one had come upon her gathering white shells on the beach half-way to Truro. I presume it was some sort of a veil she wore over her face—to Old Harbor it was the “han’k’chief.”

We had all seen the Handkerchief Lady, but none of us had ever seen the place where she lived. Her dwelling was a hovel; it was a mansion; it was a palace of horrible witcheries; it was a hole scraped in the sand. It lay miles away over the dunes; it was in the neighborhood of Cahoon Hollow Station; it was near-by, just around the shoulder of some hill a boy had never explored; it was anywhere. Some said she had a child, others denied it, and I have witnessed fights in the front street on every phase of this one point. The only thing we knew surely was that nobody had ever seen the Handkerchief Lady’s face.

Of course we were wrong. There was a time when many people had seen her face and seen that it was very beautiful. There was a time when the Handkerchief Lady was a girl, and the well-beloved of Old Harbor. Boys of ten and thereabouts should not know of these things. There came a time when eyebrows were lifted with meaning and women whispered across back fences. There came a time when these same women, firm-mouthed and righteous, plied her with hard questions; but she, because she was so wicked, hung her head and would not tell them the name of the

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father of the child she was going to bear. There had been a fine yacht and a fine yachtsman in the harbor that spring. The women remembered this and raised their brows again.

It was the Handkerchief Lady who went out into the sand the day after that.

And now suddenly, through the touch of my kinsman, I found myself touching this remote and mysterious existence. In the days that followed Dedos took on for me all the trappings of romance. I moved along the edge of an alluring land, oppressed by the burden of my secret knowledge.

I saw the two together again before Dedos sailed with the *Angie*. They were walking over the dunes beyond Snail Road, the man floundering heavily, the girl scarcely discernible except when a ridge brought her against the sky. So long as I could see them they walked far apart and seemingly un-mindful of each other.

One evening Dedos came out to announce that he had found a man to go with him—Johnnie Silva. My father roared, and even I joined in the mirth over the joke. Johnnie Silva was hardly more than a boy, and half-witted in the bargain.

But Dedos was not through with his ponderous comedy. The next day he sailed away with his frail crew and a brave new set of dragging-nets. He put them down in the wrong place and took no mackerel, though half a mile to the leeward Sim Mayo stocked seventeen barrels. He went again and went wrong again—twice.

My father was dragging with Antone Perez that year, in the *Flores*, and doing very well as dragging

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goes. I shall always remember the day they went out for the last set of the season. A sharp air blew offshore, catching up the after-swell of a dead easterly in a diaphanous violet fringe along the beach, and this fringe at either extremity of sight merged into the luminous veil that shrouded the horizon. The world was like the chamber of a shell immeasurably magnified.

I remember the veil about the horizon so vividly because against it I saw over twenty sail of draggers making out for the last set. One of them was the *Angie*.

They came back after dark that night, not the nicely slanting fleet I had seen against the opalescent veil, but a straggling rout of lights fighting around Long Point through the seas of a northeaster. Long before sundown, when the thing was making up, my mother's hands playing in one another had betrayed her mind, and since that time she had been outdoors, hovering along the front fence, with her eyes to sea. Her anxiety grew with the hours, and as the dark came on she forgot about me and worried aloud. It was not till one of the lights drew away from the struggling rout and made down for our own Creek that her writhing hands grew calm and she went indoors to prepare a belated supper.

I ran down to the Creek and watched the *Flores* come to an anchor. And there I saw something to set me wondering. The *Flores* had gone out that day with my father and Antone Perez. She came back with three men—even through the streaming darkness I was sure of it. When they had ferried

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ashore I saw that the third figure was Johnnie Silva.

As soon as the three had come into the kitchen my mother knew that something was wrong. The picture of her hands all covered with meal and spread wide in apprehension remains with me to this day.

"W'ere's the *Angie*?" she demanded. "W'ere's heem—my cousin?"

She had to put the question again before she had an answer, and then it was only my father's hand gesturing toward the open sea.

"Drown'ded?" my mother screamed.

"God 'e knows," said my father, hunching his shoulders. "Ded's wouldn' come een. We got Johnnie off 'eem—Ded's wouldn' come een."

"Says he's goin' t' git feesh," Perez broke in, with the venom which hides a fisherman's trouble, whatever it is. "We come astern o' heem an' p'inted at the weather, an' he stood up there shakin' hees head. 'I'm goin' t' git feesh afore I goes een,' he says, an' we couldn' move heem if all hell was comin' over the sky-line. We got Johnnie off an' come een weeth the rest. Dedos out there now—seven mile off Plymouth."

"Debil sheep," growled my father. He had been swearing all the time—a running, terrible bass, holding up the other's recitative.

I have always wondered if, when they ran astern of him that afternoon, Dedos stood up against the sunset. That is the way I like to think of him, with his big legs apart to the roll of the "bad boat," a huge, dark silhouette against the crimson explosion, no longer a ponderous fugitive, but waiting.

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That was one of those nights when the little house cannot forget that it sits upon a frail ribbon of sand forty miles to sea. The harbor cries to the bay, and the bay screams to the ocean, and the ocean thunders back across the Neck to the crying harbor. To me that night in my cot under the roof came the talking of all the stations—the bell at Long Point, dismal; the Race, with its blaring panic; Peaked Hill moaning and sobbing; and the gibbering agitation of High Land. And all through the hours before I slept my mind could never leave off thinking of my mother's cousin riding alone in the "bad boat," "seven mile off Plymouth."

The next morning I lay late in bed, deceived by the darkness in my garret. It was one of those black days when to read print one must crowd up close to the window. I played shipwreck with my little brother, Man'el, almost all day, down in the clamorous fish-shed, muddling his small head with terrific denunciation of his cowardice, thundering at him to go ashore with the rest, while I posed with my feet as wide apart as I might manage on the sail-cloth and defied the elements. All that day men came out along the State Road to talk with my father and peer through the scud to sea.

The second day more people came out, some of them women, though the State Road was a booming hell of sand and wind and water. I noticed that none of them peered to sea this day, and that the women gathered in knots and looked at my mother and shook their heads. After a while it came to me that Dedos must be dead.

I tried to get this through my brother's head:

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I did my best to make him understand the sudden importance that had been thrust upon us, and grew very impatient at his lack of enthusiasm. But that day is dwarfed into a brief and unimportant passage of time by the night which followed—perhaps the most momentous night of my boyhood—the first night I passed outside of my own bed.

Two vessels were aground on Peaked Hill bars that night. Peaked Hill is just across the Neck from us, and all night long people were going back and forth from Old Harbor, most of them stopping for a word or a cup of coffee, so that our house was like a stage with its alarums and excursions. My mother was so busy with these comings and goings that she forgot all about me, and I watched the hands of the kitchen clock move around with a rising sense of adventure.

Any shipwreck is the cardinal concern of a sea-people. My mother gathered the news from the incomers and passed it on to the outgoers with such an energetic care for the last scrap of it that a new idea grew up in my head. I waited for a moment when she was alone, went to her and said, pointing over the Neck with my thumb:

“Uncle Dedos out there?”

She looked at me and shook her head.

“No, Zhoe; Dedos weel never come back. He dead. He drowned een dat debil boat—long afore now, Zhoe.”

So I had been right before. I had it from her own lips.

I think she was upon the point of sending me off to bed then, but at that moment more women

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came in, six or eight of them, their damp clothes sending up a mist in our hot front room. Over their shoulders, as they entered, I saw a streak of the moon, and knew that the storm had broken with a shift of wind. I should have noticed that the world seemed strangely quiet long before had I not been so overcome with the spectacle of the kitchen clock telling the hour of eleven, and my own struggle to keep awake.

It was not long before this struggle had me back to my last ditch. I crawled under the front room table to hide my shameful state and closed my heavy eyes, unmindful of the chattering voices.

I do not know how long I lay there before I was awakened by an abrupt cessation of noise in the place. Without moving, I opened my eyes ever so little. Then I opened them wide, very much awake.

Young as I was, I realized that something very queer would be afoot with the Handkerchief Lady's daughter in our front room. She stood up with her back against the door, her bare feet in a little ring of spattered sand, her hands tangled in her ragged skirt, and her head bent forward and smothered under its burden of tawny hair.

II

FAIR NAMES

FOR a long time not a sound was heard in the room. I couldn't understand for the life of me why all the women had stopped talking because a girl no more than half the age of the youngest among them had come into their midst. From where I crouched in the shadow I could see old Mrs. Sousa staring straight ahead of her, with little hard lines radiating from the corners of her mouth. After a time I heard two of the women whispering in another part of the room, and then my mother's voice, loud and abrupt:

"W'at do you wan' here, girl?"

I believe she thought the Handkerchief Lady's girl had come about Dedos—I know I had no other idea.

"W'at you wan'?" my mother asked again. The girl remained silent, nor did she move, except that her hands disentangled themselves from the skirt and went up under the veil of hair. In the quiet moment that followed I heard the tide gnawing at the edges of the Creek and footfalls of people coming into the State Road from the path across the Neck. The girl heard the footfalls too, moved from the door and stood beside the table, not a yard from my head.

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"W'y don' the chil' speak?" Mrs. Sousa was saying, each word separate and hard, when there came a crash of the opening door. Then there were many people filling the little room, staring at the Handkerchief Lady's girl—a dozen voices mingling questions.

It must have been a strange and terrible coming into the world for that child of vacant places. A fresh circle of sand grew about her bare feet, close to me—a signal that her ankles were shaking. Of a sudden an immense, unreasoning pity for her came over me. I hunched myself nearer to her, protruded my head between her skirt and the edge of the table, all unmindful of a banged ear and the crash of show dishes. Looking up under the hanging hair, I saw that her face was drawn and her eyes wide with fear, and I lied to her with a shrill might that hushed the clamor of the room in the space between two words.

"He *ain't* dead," I screamed at her. "Eet's meestake—he ain't dead."

"No—not dead," she screamed back at me, her face whiter than ever in the shadow. Then she turned and faced the room, startled into courage.

"No," she cried out, "she ain't dead, but she's sick. My mother's sick, and she says she'll be dead—and she wants a—a minister."

Then, before I knew it, her hand was gone from my shoulder and I saw her skirt fluttering in the blue of the moon out of doors.

I shall always remember the moment that followed as the moment of a discovery which comes to most children after they are grown up. I remem-

STORM

ber saying to myself—and these are not words put back into my mouth from later years—I said to myself: “Why, they’re actin’ like they was kids an’ had been talked to.”

It struck me most in the men—stern and serious men with wind-blackened faces, old men from the Islands who had jostled the elbow of death every day that they had taken their bread—edging away now into the corners of the room, muttering pity, wondering what was to be done, and looking everywhere but in the eyes of their neighbors.

I didn’t know what the women were about till I heard two of them whispering near me.

“Eet’s out beyond Black Water,” one of them was saying.

“No, eet ain’t. Eet’s furdur t’ d’ east’rd. An’ eet’s queer—eet’s queer.” The second of the whisperers smoothed her damp apron with wide gray-brown hands.

“I t’eenk I beeter go out an’ see w’at I keen do,” she said, this time aloud. Immediately there were a dozen women who would go. The words had been like a spark through the surcharged atmosphere of the room. All the women there were ready to go out and smooth the death-pillow of the Handkerchief Lady. In the common revulsion of feeling they were ready to forgive the Handkerchief Lady and forget her sin—the sin of going away into the sand that long-ago day instead of coming to them in humility. I may have been an oversensitive child—I do not know why I should have been—but I trembled and went hot all over at this piling up of sudden kindness.

STORM

The women trooped to the door, leaving the men about the edges of the room, opened it, poured out over the sill—and stopped there.

Two men were standing in the moonlight, one of them, the larger, with his hands lifted. The second of the two was my father. I had not seen him leave the room. He must have gone out by the wharf way.

The man with the lifted hands was Father Ventura, the priest of Old Harbor parish. The Portuguese boys used to shout at the Protestant boys, when I was a child, that Father Ventura could pick up anybody in Old Harbor with one hand. He was such a priest as one expects to find along the frontiers of the world. I think of him now as a lawless man—a man who loved his brother more than he loved the letter of any law.

“Where are you going, children?” he asked. And because my father had told him already, he went on without waiting.

“No, you’re not going out there. I’m going alone.”

It was not till I was years older that I could understand why he said that.

He had said that he was going alone, but he was wrong. The night had gotten into me. I slipped out of the kitchen door, skirted the fish-shed and a corner of our own dune, and presently came up with the big man striding to the northeast, away from the State Road. Here was the greatest adventure. After a little Father Ventura bent down and took my hand.

It was an odd-looking world we went through

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that night. The wrack of the broken storm streaming across the moon's face threw a multitudinous unrest over the vacant and featureless sand. We seemed to trudge along through the rout of a tremendous, impalpable army.

We had set out to the northeast, but with the bending of the shore-line we bore more and more to the eastward till, looking back from the crest of a hummock, I saw open water between us and the lights of my father's house. Then we passed Black Water, lying stark and motionless, as though one among that shadow army had fallen for the last time. We were beginning to come into the massive dunes that buttress High Head to the southeast. All my life I had wondered about those dunes standing across a corner of the bay from me, and here right away was something to speculate upon. On the summit of the last shoreward dune burned a tiny spark of light. We passed it a hundred yards to the left, but I could make out nothing else on the crest but the bald sand.

We had come a long way, and I was beginning to tail out at the end of Father Ventura's arm and near wishing I was in my bed at home, when we crossed the shoulder of a rise and saw below us the place where the Handkerchief Lady lived.

The naked sand swept down from the north and east and south and west, without a flaw of any kind to marr the barrep ring. A thicket of trees, like dregs in a cup, made a spot of black in the center of the depression. When we had come down the side of the bowl we had to wind our way through the tops of buried trees before we stood on the

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level floor of the thicket itself. The sand was gnawing at the dregs. I went to the spot when I was in Old Harbor a year ago, and the sand had finished its work. The cup was empty.

Father Ventura must have been there before, because we were immediately in a narrow, well-trodden path, with the light of a window shining at the other end. Here we had to go in single file, so I let go of Father Ventura's hand; and when he had come to the door and opened it I fell back, suddenly turned timid, and stayed outside in the glowing checkerboard under the window.

I was not at all afraid here, I was so taken up with wonder over the house. I call it a house, but there is really no word to say what the Handkerchief Lady's abode was like. It was made of incongruous bits of almost everything one can imagine—boards, bricks, stones, tin cans flattened out, sail-cloth—but all fashioned together with such an intricate fortune, and so studded and patterned with many-colored shells, and so furbished and worked upon, that it seemed more like a precious trinket wrought by some master-craftsman than any human dwelling-place. Nor did it stop with the house, for all the open space about it, and even among the tree-trunks, was illuminated and embellished with patterns of shells, so that where the moonlight fell it appeared like silver and lacquer work.

From the memory of this childhood picture I have built up in myself a monstrous and heretical belief, and that is that the Handkerchief Lady was good.

I could see her now when I stood on tiptoe and peeped in through the window. She lay on the bed

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with her back to me, and I saw that the "handkerchief" was not there.

The priest stood over the bedside with a crucifix in his hand, talking, but not loud enough for me to hear. He was so big, and the crazy-cornered room was so little, that he appeared to my eyes to be holding the whole affair about him with his shoulders. By contrast, the frail white hand of the woman, fluttering away the things he was saying to her, seemed to have passed over already into the world of spirit. For many years I could not understand that the Handkerchief Lady's fathers had worshiped God at Marston Moor and so she must not listen to him whose fathers had worshiped God among the lemon-groves.

The Handkerchief Lady's girl was only a shadow to me, cast upon the opposite wall from some invisible corner. The shadow never stirred except when the priest turned his head toward the corner and said a word to the girl.

After a time it seemed that Father Ventura talked about the girl, quieting the dying woman's heart. He told her he was going to take her daughter with him and see that she was cared for. He pictured a place of wonderful joy and beauty where the girl was to be welcomed, and I think the mother believed him, but the shadow's arms were up now in rigid dissent and pleading, and when he persisted the girl hurried out of the corner and came to the door and opened it.

She could not have been more than four feet from me as she stood there looking out through the night. She gazed so long, and with such an

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intensity of expression on her face, and her clenched hands went out before her with such an agony of appeal, that I turned and followed her eyes to see what she was looking at. And there, just over the southern rim of the bowl, burned the spark of light we had passed on our way. She must have heard me when I turned, for when my eyes came back to her she was staring at me as though she were seeing a ghost.

"I come with heem," I explained, pointing through the window. She turned away indoors with a little gasp at me.

And then the Handkerchief Lady went away, out of the gray bowl with the dregs at its bottom. She had her two hands pressed together, praying in her own way. Father Ventura's lips and hands moved through the form of extreme unction in silent pantomime, offered in spite of her and in spite of the law. And thus the two made shift between them to open the gates of heaven to the Handkerchief Lady.

At the last she raised up with a little start and fell back on the pillow, with her face upward now, so that her profile came before me. It was so I saw the Handkerchief Lady's face in her death. I wondered and wondered to see it so beautiful, for people in Old Harbor whispered that she had torn and marred herself, and that that was why she wore the piece of cloth. I suppose they needed a reason for something that was beyond them, and made it up.

And now came my first great fright of this night. I was standing with my nose pressed against the

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glass and my eyes straining at this great and tragic thing that my head was too small to take in, when the grating of a foot on shell sounded behind my back. I was so startled and terrified that I dropped on my knee below the window, and for an instant could not bring myself to look around. The discreet footfalls drew nearer to me; then I heard an oath gasped out above and became aware that a man stood over me with his hands reached forward to grasp the sill. I looked up directly at his face, upon which the full glow of the interior modeled a ghastly stare—mouth hanging open, brow tortured by the convolutions of pain, and eyes that stared with the fixed intensity of a maniac.

It was Mr. Snow.

It is strange that he had not seen my silhouette when he approached so cautiously over the shell patterns. It is certain that he had not, however, for when I moved an ankle in my fresh terror at finding who the mad night-walker was, it touched his leg, and he was startled in turn. He jumped away from the window with a rattle in his throat, then a cackling oath, and then he ran away through the pale tangle of the thicket. Later I saw him, still running heavily, pass up the side of the bowl like a monstrous black fly and disappear over the rim.

There was no time just now to try and understand this happening. Within the room the priest lifted up the girl who was down on her knees beside the bed, and drew the coverlet over the Handkerchief Lady's face. Then he led her away, talking all the time, and they had come as far as the door

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when she realized what he wanted. I know now that he wished her to come back to my father's house with me while he stayed and watched out the night. When she did understand, the door was already open and I could hear her words.

"I can't go away," she was crying. "I can't go away. I've got to stay here—please—please."

And then her eyes went out over the sand, and she stopped with a sudden intaking of breath.

"Why—why—it's out," she said, slow and wondering. "It's—gone—out—"

The next moment she had broken away from Father Ventura and run back into the house. When she reappeared she seemed distracted. First she made as though she would run away through the trees; then she glanced back over her shoulder at the room; and then she did not know what to do. Father Ventura believed she had gone out of her mind. He put his arm about her shoulders, and the touch seemed to straighten her out a little. She looked down at me, glanced again at the spot where the spark had been, then, bending over, thrust into my hand a candle and matches.

"Run, boy!" she whispered. "Run, run, run and light the lantern! Go quick—please."

It never entered my head to question when she whispered like that. I did not even look at the priest. I thrust my bulging hand into a pocket and scurried away as fast as my legs would carry me through the thicket path and up the shelving sand of the slope to the south.

I was not going so fast when I reached the top. Here was a strange enough thing for a child to be

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doing at one o'clock in the morning. I have often wondered over that picture of myself, laboring very small and very tired up that sweep of moon-lit sand, my head too full of this extraordinary night to be at all amazed or appalled at being where I was. I had long ago forgotten how queer it was that a light should be burning on the top of a barren dune.

When I came to the crest of the slope I looked out across a mottled valley toward a hummock which reared over its other side, itself in the shadow of a wisp of cloud. In the strange light it appeared a day's journey away—it was really not above a hundred yards, as I found when I had gotten myself heavily across it.

It was no difficult thing to find the lantern, hanging from a twig driven in the sand, for beyond a few spears of "poverty grass" the hummock was bare as the roof of a house. I put the candle into the little old-fashioned box of glass, lit it, and sat down within the circle of light beneath.

Here I was, all alone, on the top of the world. Rags of cloud still streamed across the moon; from the invisible beach far below the thin crying of the surf droned up to me in my little chamber of light, and it seemed of a sudden to be years since I had moved or spoken.

I was so very sleepy. My sight seemed to have become ponderable, so that I moved it from place to place with a definite effort. It rested upon the path of the moon's reflection athwart the bay, and from there I could not lift it.

And now happened one of the strangest things

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my memory has to show me. As I stared and stared at that long shimmering lane I became aware that something lived upon it—something low and black, coquetting sluggishly with the intricate whirls and convolutions of the watery fire, floating idly, and yet progressing across the path from the east to the west. It came nearer and nearer the western edge, and then, just as it was about to vanish from the flaming street, it appeared to hesitate, then to shrink upon itself till it showed only a fraction of its former bulk. For some inexplicable reason somebody's boat out there had worn about and was standing in for the shore and the lantern and me.

It grew before my eyes, sidling down the edge of the light like some king's hunchback of old, clinging to the balustrade of the palace stairway. All my days I had seen boats—boats of every kind—but my eyes had never rested upon the like of this. It was a harlequin of all boats, a travesty on the whole beauteous race of them. Its mast was broken in half, its sails a gossamer of rags, it lurched and veered and wallowed like a disreputable character far in his cups.

Thus it came along until the curve of the dune obliterated it, so that I could not see how it came to the beach.

I was now so done up with the night, and my mind so battered and outraged by the things that had been put upon it, that I verily believed the thing crawling over the shoulder of the hummock a little later was the crazy boat itself. The black hulk reeled against the sheen of the water behind

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in the same abandoned way as it progressed ponderously up the long, smooth slope. After the first moment of panic I knew that it must be a man. And then, as the silhouette broadened and darkened, I fell into such another fright that I could not have moved, I believe, had I been struck with a whip.

It was Dedos.

But Dedos was dead. Everybody knew Dedos was dead.

It was Dedos. But I had my mother's word that Dedos was dead.

Then it was the ghost of Dedos.

He came up and passed over the ridge, not fifty feet from where I cowered under the lantern. His head was sunk forward upon his chest, his garments hung loose about him, as though he had lost half his girth. And yet he seemed immeasurably larger than I had ever seen him in other days—gigantic, portentous, terrifying.

He passed over and down the other side. And when I looked across the little valley another big black man was coming down the opposite slope. It was Father Ventura, coming to get me. They met at the bottom of the hollow. I could see the priest's arms raised in wonder, and even his word came to me.

"Dedos!"

Then Dedos was talking and the priest listening, raising his arms in other wonder and repeating in a different way, *"Dedos."*

After that the two men started back up the slope toward the rim of the Handkerchief Lady's cup. As they went they grew to be monstrous creatures

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that reeled and staggered up an endless stairway of cold fire leading away into the moon—but the last part of this was in my dream.

The next thing I knew I was being lifted in some one's arms. I opened my eyes to the light of a new day and looked down over my father's shoulder into shallow water over white sand. He stood to his thighs in our own creek, and there, when I lifted my hot lids, was the little house, looking thin and unreal in the horizontal rays of the sun. It was utterly beyond me at that moment to try and understand why a multitude of people should be crowding along the bank and gesticulating in our direction, or how Mr. Snow should stand among them, as substantial and unruffled in his white collar and waistcoat as though he had never in his life gone dune-running of a night. I closed my eyes again.

After a little I opened them and turned my head. Three or four feet away, and low down, was the rail of a wrecked sloop—wrecked, in that everything above-decks was either washed away or battered to shreds. It was beginning to cant to port with the seeping away of the tide. It was the *Angie*.

Two figures stood up near the wheel in the stern—Dedos and the Handkerchief Lady's girl. Dedos's huge arm lay across the girl's shoulders, and he looked out at the people on shore with something so nearly akin to defiance that it seemed incredible on the face of fat and comical Dedos. There were new lines along his face, his shirt hung about him in damp festoons; he was not so heavy by twenty

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pounds as when the fleet of draggers went out, so nicely slanting.

And the Handkerchief Lady's girl. I do not know what to say about the Handkerchief Lady's girl, for I can find no words to tell the way in which she stood close to Dedos and looked up at him. Never was so much sadness and gladness together in any one, not struggling, but mingling in peace.

For the Handkerchief Lady's girl of yesterday possessed as fair a name as any in Old Harbor this day. There had been a marriage as well as a death in the house of motley the night before. I know all about that marriage now, for I have heard it told time and time again by her own lips, when I was still a boy and she my Aunt Agnes. Then I knew that light was burning upon the bald hummock because she and Dedos had made it up between them that she should put it there if ever she should be in great trouble—to be seen from the town or the bay.

Now my father hitched me over to the other shoulder and spoke to Dedos.

"Were's Fadder Ventura?" he asked.

Dedos pointed back across the corner of the bay toward High Head.

"He's watchin'," he said.

Then, leaving the girl by the wheel, he walked forward, got down on his knees, lifted a hatch, and plunged his arms into the water which almost filled the hull of the *Angie*. When his hands came up again my father and I and all the people along the shore saw that they were full of mackerel. He

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threw them over the side, went down and brought up others and others, casting them abroad over the water with a gesture which no alien air will ever efface in a child of the Islands.

“By ——,” my father marveled; “he got feesh—lek he said. Damn—dat’s one good boat—dat *Angie!*”

III

I START UP-STREET AND GO MUCH FARTHER

LOOKING back at it now, it seems to me that Old Harbor must have been the strangest town in a thousand miles. When I was a boy there it boasted but a single street worthy of the title (the "back street" came to be another, but that grew up with me).

Between this "front street" and the beach a solemn file of fish-houses, sail-lofts, wharves, chandlers' stores, and structures of the like sort lounged like seasoned critics at a "first night," each with one eye upon the nautical drama of the harbor and the other upon the hoi-polloi beyond the aisle.

But never was such a hoi-polloi of crazy-cornered houses as that, jammed in between the aisle of the front street and the barren gallery of the sand-hills. Never did so small a company of dwellings face so many different quarters of the compass, and never did tormented lanes and alleyways so nearly break their backs trying to win the front stoops of all of them.

But the town was stranger still in the passing populations of men which it harbored. I remember one week-long gale when it seemed to me that all the seafaring nations of the earth jostled elbows in

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our little street. I have seen the open square at the head of Long Wharf perfectly white with man-of-war's-men, and fine white threads of them seeping away through the breakneck lanes. When the fleet came back from the Banks, of an autumn, the town to the westward was like a flower-garden gone to riot with the scarves and reefers of the men. Then, especially in the later years, Old Harbor might have been anywhere in the world but in New England, and the tongue of my own fathers, the Island Portuguese, blotted out the native speech.

One of the very special days of my boyhood was that in my eleventh year, when I was allowed to go "up-street" all alone to make a visit at the house in Shank Painter where Dedos and my Aunt Agnes had lived ever since the day after that momentous night when the Handkerchief Lady died. I had been up there before, but always "taken along." Now it was upon a special invitation to myself, and myself all alone, that I set out upon the State Road about ten o'clock of a sunshiny April morning, very grand in my best suit and rather disgusted at the racket that little Man'el raised by kicking at the inside of the gate and howling.

I walked along briskly, with my hands in my jacket pockets and my eyes on the roofs and steeples ahead. It was a very large world that morning, pregnant with possibilities of adventure and romance, and I the only visible heir to them all just now. One may be as tall as a grenadier and stout as a Father Ventura so long as there is not another about to destroy the proportions.

I was joined by a man who had been working

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on the sea-wall in front of Monty Guarda's cottage, where the front street officially relieves the State Road. I did not like this man on account of his eyes, which were little and shrewd and peering. I liked him still less when he hailed me as "Joey Snow," as if to curry favor with me by taking me for a son of Old Harbor's rich man, in my fine suit of serge.

"My name *ain't* 'Snow,'" I ruffled.

"Ain't *Snow*? Oh, I guess it is. I know *you*."

I was beginning to be afraid of this little-eyed man. I walked faster. He lengthened his stride. I wanted to run, but the dignity of that special invitation held me back. Mr. Hemans, the "down-street" blacksmith, was standing at the door of his shop. My tormentor appealed to him.

"D'you know this lad, Will?"

Mr. Hemans squinted at me carefully. "Why, that's Tony Snow's boy, ain't it? *Ginny*—"

You may figure me now, no longer bound by the shackles of dignity, running away up-street as tight as I could go, with dumfounderment in my head and fear in my heart.

"My name's Joe *Manta*," I panted over and over, in desperation; but somehow those two mistakes had suddenly taken the familiar sound out of it, and in my terrified bewilderment I never stopped till I had galloped all the way to the mouth of Shank Painter.

There I recollected in time that here was no way to blunder into a house, panting and dripping, when one had come by special and particular invitation. So I eased up, and between my anxiety

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to be there and my ideas of dignified and formal approach I made a moderate pace of it till I stood knocking at the door at last.

Aunt Agnes was a long time in coming. When she did open the door she bundled me into the parlor without much ceremony and ran away out of sight with something thrown over her shoulder about pies in the oven or out of the oven, I never learned which.

I was somewhat surprised by this abrupt reception. But I was more dumfounded at the spectacle which met my eyes in the parlor. It seemed that I was *not* the only guest that day, after all. For here was certainly another visitor, and one who commenced straightway to attract my attention by every gesticulation known to a little girl of seven. After my first moment of consternation I paid no attention to her, but got up in a chair and sat on the middle of my back so that my feet would touch the floor. Presently I remembered to take off my cap, then I stared about at the bric-à-brac and the pictures on the walls with intense interest; but, no matter how I would look the other way, there was that child in some corner of my vision, turning her head over to one side to smile at me, or holding up a shell just to show off the curve of her wrist, or jumping furiously up and down and clicking her heels together. I decided that this baby was trying to make a fool of me. I wished very much that Aunt Agnes would come in and put an end to this idiotic business, for it embarrassed me to have to ignore the child so pointedly.

If I thought she was to be ignored, pointedly or

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otherwise, I was mistaken in the young person's character. When all other wiles had failed, she approached my chair by the unique method of hopping on one foot while she held the other in her two hands, and put to me the question direct.

"What's your name?"

She had succeeded. "Joe *Manta*," I screamed at her.

I was beginning to see a wide and well-laid conspiracy against the security of my name, and here was one of the conspirators trying to catch me off my guard. She was dancing up and down now and clapping her hands.

"What's your name?" she cried, tossing her hair at me. And I shrieked it back at her louder than before and slapped her hand that was out toward me, I was so furious. She was the most amazing child. She drew the injured member back and petted it with her other hand, such a cataclismic storm on her brow as I have never seen on another. It was so magnificent that I would gladly have sunken farther down in my chair had I not been afraid I would slip and make matters worse than ever. Then, before I knew it, she was hopping up and down and gurgling and crying for me to say it again. But Aunt Agnes was in the doorway by this time, wanting to know what all the fuss was about.

I was very red and dumb. It was difficult to say what all the fuss *was* about. She told me the little girl's name was Allie Snow. Then I was still more suspicious and glum, making a gloomy meal of dinner, which we three ate alone, because Dedos

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was away dragging and no telling when he might be home. We had come to the pie before I had anything to say.

"Aunt Agnes," I demanded, suddenly, "my name *eez* Manta, ain't eet?"

Allie giggled at that.

"Why, of course it is," Aunt Agnes assured me.

"Eet *ain't* Snow, *eez* eet?" I persisted. She looked at me with a puzzled expression.

"Who's been calling you Snow?" she asked.

"Oh, some men."

"Well, don't you mind, Joe. It's because they don't know any better." Then, understanding how real my little trouble was, she went on: "You see, Joe, when your father came here he was a sailor in one of Mr. Snow's ships, and so people around here were too lazy to find out all the new men's names and so called them all Snow for a while. See?"

I nodded my head. "D' they call *you* Snow, Aunt Agnes?"

I have no idea what made me ask that question, nor could I understand the sudden redness of her face or the whiteness that followed. But I was aware in a vague way that both of us were uncomfortable. I hurried with another question.

"Aunt Agnes, what's a ginny?"

"*I'm* a ginny, eef anybody wan' a know eet."

It was not Aunt Agnes who answered, but big Dedos, who had tottered up to the door in an agony of discretion to give the Handkerchief Lady's daughter a surprise, and now choked the opening with his wide person.

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"Joe," he announced, solemnly, "you call *y'self* ginny, an' eet's all righ', but eef anybody udder call you ginny, you geet 'eem, see?"

And I remembered that.

After Dedos had finished his meal we all went into the front room for a while, before the dinner dishes should be done up. There was one thing that I could not fathom for the life of me—why Aunt Agnes should forever be hugging and kissing little Allie Snow, or holding her off at arm's length to look at her, or whispering things in her ear. I told myself fiercely that I didn't care and turned my attention to Dedos, who sat in a comfortable lump where he could see out of the front window. But all the same, here was my great day in a fair way to being robbed of all its glamour, when something occurred that set its course pounding off in an utterly unexpected quarter, where it was to gather more of the light of high adventure than I had dreamed.

Aunt Agnes and little Allie had been carrying on in their unaccountable way for perhaps half an hour, with me kicking my heels in wretchedness and jealousy, when of a sudden I marked such a look of dismay upon Dedos's comical features that I slid off my chair with an involuntary squeak and ran to look over his shoulder.

What I saw in the street was this. Perhaps a hundred and fifty feet down Shank Painter came Mr. Snow, ruddy and pompous. His face was more than usually red and bulbous, and he approached with a heavy velocity that struck me as somehow portentous. Another figure hovered in the middle-

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distance, a gaunt, yellow-skinned female in uncommonly tight black, who alternately fluttered her hands above her head and clamped them over her mouth—such a picture of panic and indecision that she made the other seem twice as awesome as he must have been.

I was so taken up with this bizarre couple that I had heard no sound behind me till I felt Aunt Agnes's hand fall on my shoulder and caught her exclamation of dismay.

"She told me he wouldn't be back till to-morrow," she gasped.

Dedos did not answer. He appeared to have been struck dumb by the spectacle. She shook his shoulder, then turned and caught up the child in her arms. "Quick—something's got to be done. Do you hear, man?"

This was all completely beyond me. Perhaps the very obscurity helped to etch the scene upon the retina of my memory; at any rate, after all these years I carry a very vivid picture of that red, fuming, rich man of Old Harbor set off by the somber and fluttering housekeeper in his wake, framed in the brilliant multi-paned window of Dedos's front room.

They grew perilously large in their frame before Aunt Agnes plucked at my coat and rushed away toward the kitchen, carrying Allie and crying over her shoulder for me to follow. A thunderous knocking at the front door found me in mid-flight through the dining-room, and its muffled clamor still persisted when I stood on the back steps listening to Aunt Agnes's low, hurried words.

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"Joe—quick—take Allie's hand. Run around by the back way just as fast as you can go. Now run."

From around the corner of the house came the gaunt woman's protestations, chopped into fragments by the fluttering hand. "She's down at—I tell you she's—down at—Mrs.—Nickerson's—"

Aunt Agnes listened, then swung the child up again, hugged her, and whispered fiercely: "Remember—remember, Allie dear—you've been down at Rosie Nickerson's. Remember. Now run."

Then she kissed her, waving us off, her eyes peering distractedly into the half-gloom of the kitchen. We had come to the alley at the back of the yard before that distant rumble of knocking left off with the faint creak of a door opening.

Aunt Agnes had told me to run, and I did run, through brush and heaps of cans and a puddle or so, not being over-careful, I am afraid, to see that my charge's small, white-shod feet had anything to do with the ground.

But she had neglected to mention where I should run, and by the time I had decided that I could not in any way understand the affair I had arrived at the spot where a straight line drawn with Dedos's back fence would naturally bring one—more definitely, the top of Pink Hill, which lies to the northward of what later came to be the back street. And here, right away, was an object of interest. The man who lived in the cottage on Pink Hill had built a chicken-pen of the most extraordinary nature, using a strange net of wire in place of the condemned weir-twine that ordinary folks used.

I examined this with care and at some length.

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Then my attention was taken by the gory heads of three fowls lying beside a chopping-block, and immediately my mind flew back to a story of my father's which had fired my imagination the afternoon before.

"See dem chick'ns?" I inquired, portentously, pointing through the novel fence. "*Poor chickens.*"

I have never seen any other face capable of such instantaneous and entire change.

"Day before yisteday," I announced, "they was one man over to Helltown bit off annudder man's nose."

"Oh — oh — oh!" she squealed, hopping faster than ever. "I want to see him."

So you see it was her fault, after all.

"Oh, eet's long ways off," I told her, waving a hand over the dunes which raised their bald heads beyond the strip of greenery to the north. She clapped her hands.

"You're too leetle," I sneered, to cover my sense of slipping. But she would hear no more. She ran a few steps over the hill and stopped to make eyes at me, then ran on and repeated the performance. After all, we would be back before dark. My Aunt Agnes it was who had told us to run—she would be as much to blame as this preposterous infant. And besides, I had determined to go the moment my eyes fell upon those heads in the chicken-pen.

We made a rush of it, sliding, tumbling, spattering down the slope into Shank Painter road, scuttling through the swamp-maples and bull-brier thickets at a wonderful rate. Once in the Race road I was comparatively at home, for I had been

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over to the Race once before with my father, and I knew Helltown must lie somewhere to the southward of that.

The sun was not so high as it should have been when we came to the top of the first dune, and we had a long way ahead of us. Here, for the first time, I began to feel the pangs of conscience, not unmingled with thoughts of the back country after dark, and that ultimate scene in the fish-house when I came home. That made me think of my fine clothes. They were far from fine now, with that scramble through the bull-brier trail. I looked down at my accomplice.

"You too leetle t' go all the way t' Helltown," I announced. The next instant she was dancing a dozen yards ahead, laughing and tossing the sand with her toes. I must try a firmer method. I turned my back to her and shouted: "I'm goin' home."

"Pa-Jim," she jeered. "Aw—Pa-Jim."

I turned and followed her twinkling shoes, my own plodding. Of course I could not go back after that Old Harbor taunt, "Pa-Jim," the nickname of a fabulous coward of another generation in our town.

When we stood on the second ridge I was more than ever alarmed to find the wind gone into the east and a low belt of fog beginning to dim the hills behind us. And there in the west, by some temporal miracle, the last bulwark of sand had eaten up half the sun. I was willing to turn back in good earnest now, but we had only to go over the next rise to look down upon Race Run, and Allie

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was already half across the hollow, while I stood gawking at the weather.

It was like her to go bounding up the next slope, flinging the sand about with the tips of joyous fingers, and then, utterly without warning, to sink down half-way to the top, moaning that she was so tired to death that she couldn't go one single step farther.

Here I was in a fine mess. I was frankly terrified now, and my terror was doubled when I looked back and saw the fog-belt advancing upon us, silent, blind, insinuating, eating up the sand with its soft and formless lips. I felt the chill of it on my face already, and so did Allie, for she looked up from her moaning and then began to wail wildly, clinging to my ankles.

"Git up outa there," I bawled at her. I dragged her to her feet in a panic and rushed her up the shelving slope at the point of my shoulder. She must not remember that she was tired.

"Here's Helltown," I exclaimed. Already she had forgotten.

"Where?" she cried.

To be sure—where? The sand before us ran down bare and empty to the crinkly beach surf, and there, a mile to the west, a thin red ribbon wound into the land where Race Run gave back afterglow of sunset. I could even make out the tiny, miserable hutches on its banks, half buried by the sand, where the winter fishermen ate and slept like beasts.

"I wanta go home," Allie was wailing into my hand.

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"We goin' home, *now*," I gave her back, fiercely, turned and dragged her away down the inland slope. And then the fog came up and swallowed us, bringing the night forward an hour in a hundred darkening seconds. I have never seen a thicker pall on the Cape, I believe. Where a moment before we had had the whole blue dome of the universe above us, now we trudged along a smothering corridor, with only the thin whisper of the surf behind to tell us where we went. After a little that, too, had gone away, and we were lost.

It seemed to me that I walked as one sometimes does in a dream, going through all the gestures of progress and remaining always in the same spot. I was tormented by hopeless memories of the candles which would be lit now in the kitchen at my father's house, and the secure proximity of grown-ups, and the warmth and household confusion.

I have no idea how long we wandered. The dark was full of things that scurried over the sand, fanned us with noiseless wings, and reached out crackling fingers to pluck at our clothes. Again and again that whispering surf came back in front of us—it seemed no matter where I would turn, sooner or later the water swung around in front of us—an insidious, invisible horror. Time after time Allie fell down and tried to cling to the sand that rained through her fingers, when I pulled her up and hustled her roughly on.

There came a time when I had to carry her. I shall never forget to the day of my death a certain interminable and formless slope up which I labored

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with the limp child. I had to stop after every pair of steps, and in the silent intervals I could hear the little rain of sand-streams flowing all about me in the sightless void.

I tugged and scrambled and blubbered. I came to the crest and fell down in a heap. An instant later I was up again, with that insistent impulse to go—to go—and keep on going. I hoisted my pathetic burden over my shoulder and plowed down the other slope, my ankles clogged by the powdery drifts. The sea was before me again, but I could not turn another time. My foot struck a solid object; next I stumbled on a surface of boards and went cold and shaking at the sound of a sleepy voice emerging from the internals of the earth.

"Get the hell outa here," said the voice.

We were on the roof of a house—had stumbled down the slope and out on top of a cabin which the sand had almost buried on the up-hill side. All the phantoms of darkness, all the dead men of tales I had heard whispered in Old Harbor, walked toward us, groping with their fleshless hands. We had come to Helltown after all.

I ran away from that hutch with all the strength left in me, came to the edge of the Run and fell down, my little companion still clutched desperately in my arms. Helltown's dead men came and went in the neighborhood—I could hear the crunching of their feet on the damp sand of the shore. They used to set false lights here and bring rich wrecks ashore—that was how it was whispered in Old Harbor. There must be ghosts of boats, then, for I could make out the faint crying of oars on

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thole-pins and the cautious grinding of keels on sand.

The ghosts had voices, hushed and discreet voices such as ghosts should have.

"Tobacco?" asked one of the whisperers.

"Yep," another answered.

"This way," whispered the first.

"And how about the kegs?"

"Same way."

The dead man of the second voice passed above me, spattering my half-covered face with sand-spray from his boots. I felt that I must look. We crouched in a very congress of black spirits, tramping here and there in methodical patterns. I observed vast lumps on the backs of some, and the bearers grunted in the soft footing, and another hissed at them to be quiet.

When one has had to do with fearful things for a certain length of time they begin to lose the edge of their terror. I became curious. I sat up. From far away, up and down the beach, the little lapping of waves came to my ears, mingled with the nearer movements of the mysterious gathering.

And now an extraordinary thing happened. The black figure who had hissed at the others to be quiet was moving toward us. When he stood above us I saw him start, peer down at us, and shake his shadowy arms in a queer gesture of amazement. A moment later my eyes were blinded by the flare of a match, and my ears caught an exclamation and a curse.

I must have been nearly out of my senses then, for when the match had gone and the stars died

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out of my eyes I have a vague memory of sprawling on my face in the sand and groping for a little Allie who was no longer there, and listening, horrified, to a furious splashing of sand making off up the dunes which was all that remained of my phantom of the gesturing elbows. Then I went under.

There was one more mysterious circumstance of this night. I was scared out of my wits on the banks of Race Run. And yet it was upon our own wharf, four miles and a half across the Cape, that my father picked me up in the early morning after his night of searching.

IV

A VISITATION OF FLESH

WHEN the middle-aged master of an iron cargo-boat undertakes to set down some of the things that have interested him in his own career, he is likely very soon to find himself afoul of trouble with the sailing instructions of the craft of letters. Those wise men who maintain their livelihood by making marks on paper, to the end that the rest of the race may laugh, weep, or fall into a profound slumber, have laid down this rule for the game: "It is forbidden to introduce into the tale any episode which has no direct bearing upon the course of the plot, or to draw attention to any character who is not destined to reappear at a later point in the narrative." This, in effect, is the dictum of the man of letters.

But how many episodes, thrilling, glowing, memorable, has each one not had to enter his life, without shaking it violently and battering its nose toward another point of the compass, and how many memories does one not cherish of meteoric and poignant friendships which died in the hour of their birth?

Accordingly, I find myself hard-pressed to hit upon any one incident to signalize those years of

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my life when I was that grotesque, pathetic, and witch-ridden male of the species which may be called neither boy nor man.

I might set down that I went skating on the Marsh Ponds in winter and fished them in summer for a handful of worthless pickerel which I devoured in conscientious agony while the rest of the family feasted on halibut steak. But such were the things which every youth that ever grew up in Old Harbor did at the proper time. And every Old Harbor youth sat, sooner or later, in Gabe Pickert's sail-loft, and learned his threescore miraculous knots and hitches, navigated the flats on a full-rigged raft and capsized, stretched a wire for the feet of Davie Pierce, the town crier, stole cranberries off the moonlit bogs, figured largely at the killing of pigs, and howled in front of houses decorated for the festival of *Mene Jesus*.

I might tell how, when my mother "counted ten on me," I invariably believed that this time I was old enough to see her through with it, and as invariably weakened at "six," went to moral pieces at "seven," and at "eight" ran away sullenly to do her bidding, under the lash of some vast, occult, and unthinkable evil which hovered about that "ten" I never heard.

I might relate how, for weeks after my adventure at Helltown, I never ventured even so far as the end of our wharf without first reconnoitering the State Road from the front-room window for the fearsome figure of our rich man, coming out to demand his daughter of me. He crept up my garret stairs in the dead of night and circled my

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cot with a furtive creaking of boards; he was forever lurking behind dunes in the back country, ready to spring out and strangle the abductor of his child. I rehearsed my defense—the shadowy unknown of the gesturing elbows—a hundred times over, and then at every rustling of leaves in the woods or the scurrying of a rabbit over the sand the whole argument fled out of my head and I ran away as tight as I could go. Even after I had seen Mr. Snow and Allie walking together up the street of the three angles I was still as wary as a fox, and many a foot-passenger in an Old Harbor lane has been startled by the impact of a small, wide-eyed boy scuttling out of a certain aristocrat's range of vision. The mystery of the man who ran away at Helltown, however, remained unsolved. He grew to be a bugaboo of my nights, gathered to himself the most monstrous attributes, and it was years before I ceased to poke a stick into the shadows for him and wonder where he could have come from and where he could have gone.

I might describe how I fell down Dedos's well, or how, remembering his words, I beat a boy at the East End school for calling me a "ginny." But here I might find myself again within the letter of the sailing instructions. The episode did surely have a certain effect upon the whole course of my after life. For, being carried away by the lust of battle, I came near killing my antagonist, who was smaller than I, before the combined strength of the schoolyard could drag me away. Afterward I grew as sick and weak as a baby at sight of the damage I had wrought, the blood that smeared the little

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fellow's face and gurgled from an ear I had torn half off his head. From that moment there began to grow up in me a certain curious horror of human contact, and in its train a distaste for human alteration which was destined one day to have a hand in the blackest passage of my life.

There was one thing I did that no Old Harbor youth within three years of mine has ever done, before or since. That was to lift, four inches clear of the ground, the ancient frigate's bell that still stands in front of Si Pinkney's junk and curiosity shop.

For it was one of the marvels of the town in those days how Tony Manta's boy grew. At fourteen my head stood an inch above my father's, and at fifteen I tipped the scales in Sammy James's feed-store at a hundred and seventy pounds. In view of this amazing visitation of flesh, it is hardly to be wondered at that I was as gloomy and dull as any goose-fish. Moreover, I was continually tormented by an itching to push things over, to kick boards loose from the wharf, to heave fish-barrels here and there without reason or aim, but merely for the feel of them against my shoulders. But I would never do this when any one was about to see—my self-consciousness was almost morbid, extending even to a fear of my mother's eye.

My favorite resort at these troublous times was a sheltered hollow behind the Cold Storage fields. On the western side of this depression the disposal of roots and turf and the "running" of a layer of sand had conspired to form an overhanging bank, some four feet high from the floor of the gully.

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Upon the verge of this bank some unaccountable whim of nature had deposited a boulder which would have weighed in the neighborhood of a ton, I should say—the only stone larger than a man's head, so far as I know, on the lower reach of the Cape.

Now it was a fine thing to duck in there on my way down-street of an afternoon, fit my shoulders beneath the cool, moist rock, and hunch and strain and sweat for five minutes on end, tugging exquisitely at the lashings of muscles and wondering if a day would ever come when the monster would stir in its bed.

It came sooner than I expected. For late one summer afternoon, when I had been standing doubled up, heaving and grunting and dreaming for ten minutes, I suddenly became aware of a smothered titter from the opposite rim of the hollow. I was caught too neatly to make a success of getting from beneath the rock, but out of the tops of my contorted eyes I saw something which swept all remembrance of the hard roof above me out of my mind. I was so startled and abashed that my back would straighten, boulder or no boulder, and the next instant I felt myself hurled forward upon the floor of the gully amid a volley of sand, roots, and pebbles. By a great stroke of fortune my rock came down at an angle, doing me no more harm than a badly pinched foot and ankle.

The three little girls whose appearance upon the scene had brought all this catastrophe forward stood on their toes and clutched their necks and kept on screaming until they discovered that I was

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not killed after all. Then two of them began tittering again at the spectacle of me sitting there with my wounded foot in my hands and my great dull face going red and white in an agony of rage and embarrassment. But Allie Snow slapped their wriggling hands, crying to them could they not see the boy was hurt, at which they left off their giggling, looked guilty, and sneaked off finally with their berry-pails tinkling against their knees.

Allie Snow was twelve years old now. As I have said, I had not seen her since the night of our adventure, except for passing glimpses, far off, walking with the gaunt woman in black, or upon a town occasion, when she would be in the front street with her father and I in a flutter of fear lest his eye should happen upon me before I could back out of the crowd, especially since I had become such a great mark.

Now for the first time I could take stock of how she had changed in these five years, and of how she had yet remained the same in odd little ways. She stood out fairly against the background of the First Ridge and the luminous breath of the summer mist hanging above it, gazing down at me with a compassion as cataclismic as was every mood she knew. In that she had not strayed a shade from the very little girl who had passed from rage to high and flaming joy in a breath. Her hair was darker than it had been and no longer curly. She wore it parted on one side and gathered in a thick braid which hung over one shoulder at this moment.

She was a beautiful and radiant child when I had

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seen her that other time, but I should have had to stretch the truth sorely to have called her even pretty now, although she had never lost the character of her eyes. Her arms and legs were too long for her body, or perhaps too thin for themselves; her face no longer bloomed with that exquisite breath of color that had made it once so lovely. For Allie had come to the years when her kind must forsake all beauty to come into their heritage of all beauty. And I, not understanding this, told myself that she was not growing up very well.

I think there was a certain obscure satisfaction in it for me just at that moment, for her compassion was harder for me to swallow than the giggling of her mates had been. A fury against her flared up in my dumb and unwieldy spirit; I fanned it with the cry that she was shamming, to show off, and when she made as if to slide down the bank to be in my way with her useless gestures, I waved her off savagely.

"I wish you'd git outa here," was what I shouted at her. As I live, I believe that she trembled upon the verge of hopping up and down and clapping her hands. If she did have that impulse, she got the better of it and shifted to a wounded air with her own bewildering flash.

"Oh, if you want to get mad—" she flung at me. Then she turned and walked away, her head in the air so long as I could see it over the rim of my little hollow.

She did not go far, though, for when I had gotten myself up and was limping painfully across the Cold Storage fields I saw a slim white figure

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half hidden in a clump of willows at the side of Paul Dyer's road, though I would give no sign that I marked her.

I had a hard time of it at the little house. It was utterly impossible to keep my hurt from being known for any length of time. The following morning my foot was so swollen that I kept it bundled in a chair all day. Naturally, it must be accounted for, and, since I was so slow of imagination, they had the truth of the matter before they were through with me.

"H'istin' stones you been, you?" my father mused, with that sarcasm he had learned from my mother. "H'istin' stones, eh?"

He stood before me with his feet wide apart and his head to one side, speculating. I saw my mother sitting at the table behind him, and wondered why the knife had dropped into the basin of potatoes and why her hands were fumbling with one another and her eyes staring at the back of my father's head with such a queer, strained expression of waiting in them.

"H'istin' stones, eh?" my father repeated once more. "Mnn—I teenk eet's about time we geeve you somethen t' h'ist. You seventeen now—ain't eet? Mike Kensey wants a man in th' *Fortune*. Mm-m-m—yeh—I see Mike Kensey t'day."

My mother's hands went back to the basin. She took up the knife and a half-peeled potato, without a look toward me or a word of comment, but it seemed to me I had never known how old she was before. I think she had seen this day on that other day when she lay in bed with her first baby

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in the curve of her arm, for that is the heritage of our Island women. Out of seventeen men, the tale of three generations in her family, only five were ever buried in ground, and for the rest of them their women waited. And so, coming of this race of women who had waited, my mother picked up the knife and the potato without a look or a word.

V

I "CARRY THINGS WITH A HIGH HAND"

FISHING in the old *Fortune* under Mike Kensey was as hard a life as a man will want to find. Ashore, in his stiff hat and broadcloth, Kensey was rather a dapper little man, but on the grounds he was a great "killer," an unmerciful "driver," and for three years running now the "high liner" of the Old Harbor fleet. Unlike most Irishmen, he was halting and indecisive in his speech; he hesitated even over his oaths, a fact liable to deceive a stranger. But the crew of the *Fortune* knew, and would cringe under his faltering abuse even after a twenty-hour run of work in a freezing weather.

Yes, it was a hard life. But it had its interludes of ease. On an average of once in ten days we made the city, tying up at the old T Wharf to market our catch and take on stores and ice, and then there was a day or two, or sometimes three, when things were slack and we could go ashore and "see life."

I shall never forget my first sight of the city. Ever since we had passed Minot's Light in mid-afternoon its invisible hand had been at work around us, gathering in the children of the sea from every point of the compass's easterly arc—far-

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separated specks and smudges on the ring of the horizon, growing and closing in till, as we approached the mouth of the ship-canal, we marched along in a troop—here a pair of mackerel-catchers from the Maine coast, here a high-sterned, wallowing schooner piled to the booms with southern lumber, here a tow of dingy coal-barges, and there a luminous cloud-speck on the sky-line astern, a full-rigger with the low sun on her canvas, come from the other side of the world.

The sun went down as we doubled the intricate passages of the harbor. And then, before us in the west, a wonderful flower bloomed in the sky—the monstrous, flaring, yellow blossom of a city at night. I stood on the forward deck and watched it grow up over our heads and listened with a wondering awe to the rising murmur of life that advanced to swallow our little ship noises. At length we closed in toward a forest of delicate black masts, let our canvas run down, slapping and rattling, and with our dying way nosed in between a couple of Gloucestermen alongside of T Wharf, under the shadow of a black, man-built cliff, pricked with rectangles of gas-light. The wharf itself was almost deserted, but beyond the gates flowed a river of people—more people than I had ever seen at one time before in my life.

That evening I went ashore with some of the men to a place called “Schlinsky’s up-stairs.” Never in my life had I seen anything so splendid as “Schlinsky’s up-stairs.” You must remember that I was a boy, and a boy whose wildest carousal up to this time had been an occasional dance at

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St. Peter's Hall, generally witnessed through a crack between a curtain and sill. And here I sat down at a little round table and had my drink brought to me by a waiter in a shirt-front, veritable, if a trifle soiled. Here I lolled back in my chair and watched with a sort of rakish fascination the languid movements of the wonderfully painted "city ladies," alternately sullen and sparkling as they drank the beer their pallid escorts bought for them.

Old Schlinsky moved about among the tables like a greasy, overfed spider, paternally familiar with the women, insinuatingly jovial with the men, a blotch of gray in the garish pattern, his austere, uncompromising, unvarying comment on life, "an eye for an eye," at bizarre odds with his good nature which savored of the licking of boots.

I suppose it was on account of my bulk that one of the women nudged another and pointed me out, not at all covertly. I was eighteen years old, and embarrassed by their frank and admiring scrutiny, but when I turned away my eyes I found others staring at me from every corner of the room, nudging and nodding at my great, ungainly figure and, I have no doubt, my vacant countenance.

Little John, my dorymate, poked his thumb in Bert Adams's ribs over this, and the two fell to joking at my abrupt popularity. I pushed my chair farther back into the gloom of the corner, abashed and supremely conscious of the screaming its legs raised on the dusty floor. Once out of the direct fire of the room, however, I found myself beginning to glow with a certain warmth of comfortable urbanity.

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After all, why shouldn't I? I was young. Old Harbor was far away.

I spilled the lees of my beer on the floor, called for a "whisky straight," and hitched my chair into the light once more. I fell to staring at the two women in front of me, but the hoped-for resumption of interest failed to materialize. Instead, I was dismayed to find them staring over another sizable man—a great, thick-chested, huge-necked prodigy of a man whose head was crowned with a halo of the reddest hair I ever beheld in my life.

It was apparent that he had just come in. When I saw him he was already seated at a table "up front," but the echo of his scraping chair was audible all about the room in a whisper of other chairs squeaking discreetly. Three women were already moving toward his table; others turned their heads to look at him. Some called out to him familiarly. He roared back at them. Every motion he made with his hands or feet or head gave me a curious impression of primitive violence, of an overmastering vitality and full-bloodedness. His skin was nearly as red as his hair—a monstrous flame of a man.

The instant he came into the room he was the center of it. He roared at the waiters, he roared at the women, scouring the place with a romping gale of good nature. He roared to a girl, and she jumped up and came to his table without so much as a glance at the man who had paid for her beer.

I remember saying to myself, "There is a man who can have anything in the world he asks for." And it so happened that that was not the last time in my life I was to say that.

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I was filled with a ferocious gloom. I pushed my chair into the shadow once more. Bert Adams's jeering and Little John's titters over my discomfiture set me brooding bitterly over the sorry figure I made beside that red-haired giant—he roaring, magnetic, vital, heroic; I sluggish, vacant-faced, smothered by my own inert vastness.

The "whisky straight" turned stale and flat. The dusty waiter came and held out his hand till I paid for my drinks. All the time he, too, stared at the red man. He counted out my change abstractedly. One of the quarters was bad. I dropped it on the table to make sure, and then I would have pocketed it, because I was never one for a row in a public place. But Bert Adams was already plucking at the waiter's sleeve, holding up the bad coin and swearing at him. Old Schlinsky waddled softly to us.

"Vere'd you ged id?" he questioned the waiter, when Bert had explained the trouble. The little man, cowed, hitched an elbow toward the red giant.

"Garries dings mid a high hand—*he* does," the Jew muttered, regarding the subject from under his bushy brows. Then he turned and looked at me, appraised my bulk, pocketed the leaden coin, and shuffled away noiselessly, muttering his formula of expiation through his foul beard.

Again and again in later years that scene has come back to me—the old Jew's look from the red man to me, and his words, "an eye for an eye," to which the passing of time has lent a peculiar quality.

That night I carried back to the vessel a flaming

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thirst to be like this heroic figure of "Schlinsky's up-stairs." Through the months that followed I set myself to the task of copying his exuberant gestures, his passionate carelessness. On a thick, driving night, out on the Channel grounds, I used to stand up in the bow of the *Fortune* and roar. I rehearsed scenes in which I "carried things with a high hand." But I always did these things when nobody was about, and for all that I made myself out a roistering swashbuckler, by some inexplicable law of opposites I grew forever more careful, judicious, chary of speech, and deliberate of movement.

Only once did I throw off this cloak of moderation. It was on a trip in the early spring that we ran into a terribly heavy weather to the east of Monumoy. It set in from the northeast during the night of our run down, and even while we were at the baiting, with the flames lying down thin and blue over the oil-torches, we knew we would not go out that morning. The lines were finished and breakfast was in progress before the expected word came down that the dories would stay aboard. By ten o'clock in the forenoon the wind had "gone back" into the north and heightened to a gale.

We lay there three days and nights at an anchor, huddled together in the steaming, battering, tossing forecastle. There was fighting. The rain came down in an interminable torrent abovedecks, but I clambered up and stood in the flood now and then, almost smothered by the roaring waters, because it was hell below.

Occasionally I would make out the skipper crawling from the after-companion, muffled in oil-

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skins, to stand and glare at the sky and water. He knew we ought to have run back under the Cape the day we came out, and he was aware that we knew it too. But in that hesitating way of his Mike Kensey was one of the stubbornest men I ever knew. I believe, now he had started to go through with it, he would have seen the *Fortune* blown clear out of the water before he would have made a sign to run.

Most of the time he glowered below in his state-room in a frightful, tremulous rage. I am certain he would have done his best to kill any man who had possessed the foolhardiness to address him in the course of those three days. Mazuka, the black cook, left his meals in a covered pan outside his door—that was the nearest any one came to personal contact with the commander.

Forward, matters were even worse. The wedge-shaped hole, only half illuminated by the gyrating lantern hung in the center, rocking, pitching, swooning, fetched up at intervals with an abrupt, breathless wriggle, as though it hesitated upon the brink of some vast, black, and bottomless cavern in the clamorous outer world of ocean. It was peopled by a double crowd of nagging men and their dim and gigantic shadows, racing and staggering over the deck and bunk-tiers. All about, the thundering drone of the waters and winds reached back to the last circumference of space, and through this booming undertone wound the thin recitative of the bilge hissing over the timbers of the *Fortune's* bottom. Five men were trying to play a game of cards far up in the peak, snarling and biting at one

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another and throwing their cards on the table so often in loud disgust that the game would never get on. Aft of them, along the benches, two rows of men faced across the table, mostly silent. Near the foot of the mast an old, white-haired man by the name of Gabriel Young droned loud, interminable, and obscene stories which verged more and more upon the supernatural and horrific as the night advanced. Seven or eight figures lay prone in as many bunks, some of them with hands or gray-socked feet hanging over the edges—one of them, Gerald Duarte, protruding his head from the shadow at intervals to scream at the card-players.

I lay on my back in my own bunk, my knees doubled up till they touched the bed of the bunk above, for at eighteen I stood three inches over six feet and weighed just under two hundred and forty pounds. My nerves screamed in protest at the never-ending drone of the water, at the rasping gutturals of the card-party, at the old man's unvarying recitative; they jerked at every explosion from Duarte's bunk or at an abrupt clatter of Mazuka's pans in the galley. The forecastle lantern, traveling forever in its wavering orbit, cut a circle of fire in the back of my eyes, and the old itching for a weight to toss or something inert and blind to batter my shoulder against had hold of me.

I stared up at the boarding above me and seemed to see that careless, fiery giant of "Schlinsky's upstairs," and I wondered what he would be doing on a night like this. He would not be whimpering in a shadow, of that I could be sure. Nor would I. With a sudden resolution, born of tattered nerves,

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I poked my head out of the bunk and bawled at the card-players.

"Shut up, you damn loud-mouthed— Hey, d'you hear me? Shut up."

This had a surprising effect upon them. They turned and stared at me open-mouthed. Then they looked at one another with the self-conscious smirks of scolded boys and began to whisper, with the tails of their eyes on my bunk.

If they were boys upbraided, I was the child in astounded triumph at a first top-spinning. I am certain that I blushed, back in the privacy of my bunk.

I could do it again.

This time it was upon the old man that I turned my clamor, demanding in the name of all the devils that he cut off his chatter. From an artistic point of view I am afraid I overdid it, but my tirade left him staring at me with hanging chin and frightened eyes.

The insistent crying of the water had turned to a soothing music. I was intoxicated with the wine of violence. It seemed to me that if I wished to go on deck and bawl at the ocean, the waters themselves would be silenced by the amazing spectacle of Tony Manta's boy "carrying it with a high hand." I lay there in my musty blankets as puffed up as an emperor, and no one in the fore-castle spoke. I ran a hand over the oblique slope of one thigh and said to myself, "I'm a whopper." From the corner of one eye I saw old Gabe Young still regarding me, his mouth ajar in a comical triangle of awe.

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Mazuka shuffled out of the galley and, clinging to the ladder with one hand, proceeded to wind the nickel clock. The clock stood at a quarter after three. The wind was falling. I have seldom known a wind to fall so fast. By twenty after three there was no sound above-decks except the thin crackling of foam lines advancing across the face of the ocean and the tattoo of water slapping at the vessel's sides. The rain had ceased with the wind. For ten minutes more we lay in this silence—an oppressive silence below-decks—a vast whispering silence without. We rocked and circled and strained in this still cavern while the nickel clock shifted its hands to a quarter of four. The silence was top-heavy; it had to be broken.

I heard a voice from above, loud and impatient. I looked up and saw the skipper's face framed in the black triangle of the companion. It was distorted almost beyond recognition by a spasm of rage. The words which poured out of his mouth were idiotic and meaningless. I have never seen a man with the marks of a debauch so plain upon him—a three-day orgy of rage.

All the men stared at him without comprehension, craning their chins at the opening, so that they presented the spectacle of a company of agitated Adam's apples. Seeing that we did not move, the captain withdrew his face, substituted his boots, and came clattering down the ladder to confront us, his fists trembling above his head.

"Get out—get out—boats—get out—damn you—boats—boats—" He turned upon us a stream of disjointed abuse that left us breathless and be-

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wildered. I, for one, was sure that the gale had blown the wits out of him. Perhaps it had. At any rate, he was doing his best to order us out with the dories to make a set—in a sea that would have ripped to pieces the stoutest trawl ever wound before a dozen fathoms had gone over the side.

The card-players still sat with their "hands," like Oriental fans, held rigidly before their chests. First one, and then all of them, turned and looked at me, wide-eyed. Then I understood what I had done when I stuck my head out of the bunk and bellowed at them. I was "boss" of the forward quarters.

What would the red man do? He would do something startling.

I doubled up like a jack-knife and crawled laboriously out of my bunk, sprawled out across the lurching table amidst a grand crash of dishes, and, as soon as I could manage my feet, stood up before the chattering skipper. He had not given over his tirade for an instant.

"What d'you want?" I bawled at him.

He *was* crazy. He struck at me, but I turned the blow with my elbow. "What d'you want?" I howled again.

Now he stopped and stared at me in blank astonishment. Mike Kensey was not used to being questioned by his men.

"I want you lazy devils to get—get the—get the hell out o' here an'—get out an' make a set—*set*—SET!"

He chattered like a monkey. I turned my head

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and eyed my mates. They were waiting for me to "carry things with a high hand" again.

"You go straight to the devil," I bellowed.

Kensey's face was white with crazy rage. He commenced to pound at me, but he could no more have harmed me than a terrier can harm a brick wall. All I knew was to put my elbows in his way. I have no doubt I was a sufficiently sheepish-looking hero, but the effect of his own impotence upon the skipper was startling. A hunted look came into his eyes. A lurch of the vessel caught him off his balance and sent him flying into an angle between the water-butt and the flour-barrel, from whence he peered out at me with small, bewildered eyes, under his elbow.

Well, I had done it. It had been a bloodless victory, but I had done it. So far as results went, the red man could have done it no better.

There was an air of suppressed exultation among the men. The card-players threw their "hands" on the table and grinned self-consciously at one another. Duarte hunched up on the edge of the bunk and slapped his thigh with a muttered "I be damned." A year's-old fetish had been thrown down.

I looked at the crumpled man in the corner and thought of this. And then I was sorry I had done it. I had stood up there, a lumbering, overgrown whelp, held my elbows awkwardly in front of me, and let this potentate of the coast fleet, this little man who was worth ten in a run of fish or a gale of wind, break his fiery heart upon my senseless hulk. There was no exultation in me now. I hated

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myself, and I hated those gloating men about me in the hot quarters. For the first time in my life I was mad.

I turned on the lot with a frightful oath, roared at them to get out on deck, and clambered up the pitching ladder before any of them could move.

The cold, quiet air outside stiffened the sweat on my face. I glared out over the heaving waters, streaked with whispering lines of spume. Here and there beyond the rails a geyser shot up gray in the starlight as the vessel wallowed into the shoulder of a swell. After a minute Little John crawled out of the forward companion.

"W'at y' goin' do, Zhoe?" he asked, staggering with the roll of the deck to where I fumbled among the trawl-tubs. I turned on him fiercely.

"Didn't you hear what the ol' man said? Hey? We're goin' out an' make this here set. Get that gang out o' there—in a hurry—*hear me?*"

He held up his hands, spread wide, in utter amazement. Then, seeing that I still glared at him, he stumbled away to the companion, one white eye gleaming over his shoulder at me. In a pause between two waves I heard a rustle of amazed protest below. I waited three or four minutes, but no one appeared. Then I went and looked down the hole.

They were all staring at the aperture. I presume I looked savage. At any rate, all of them began putting on their oil-things feverishly, clinging to the bunks and table with exaggerated gestures of insecurity, as if to protest in pantomime against the violence of the sea.

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I watched till the first of them, Gabe Young, had his feet on the ladder. The skipper still lay crumpled up in his haven between the barrel and the butt. Then I went and stood over the trawltubs while the whimpering company filed out of the steaming hole, and saw that each boat's crew took up its gear and went away to the dory-nests.

There have been so many stories of that black scene on the deck of the *Fortune* that it is hard for me to pick the truth out of the jumbled tradition. It was an utterly insane project, as any one in his wits would know, but I was laboring for the lost honor of Mike Kensey, and had fallen heir to his insanity, I suppose. I have only a confused memory of gray splotches of scared faces and fluttering hands, of them shifting here and there to gather in irresolute groups of defiance and scattering again as I rushed them.

As I look back upon it it seems a miracle that we ever got so much as a single dory over the side alive that morning. Number Three and Number Nine, both of the starboard nest, were swamped and lost in the launching. Their crews stayed aboard with the "spare hand," Dave White—he had been one of the card-players. All the rest, ten dories and their crews, twenty men, went over the side, and they were all white and chattering in the gray of the coming dawn.

Little John and I were the last to go, whirling at the ends of the port falls over a chasm of boiling black water that clutched at the bottom of our frail craft, sucked us into its clamorous belly, and spewed us out in a volley of spray, carrying away

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three feet of our gunwale on the schooner's side and throwing both of us flat in the bottom of the dory. Then the tide swept us clear, and the *Fortune*, cutting dizzy circles on the gray mat of the sky, diminished silently. The last I saw of her decks, Mike Kensey was running aft from the forward companion, with his hands above his head, shouting.

VI

A VESSEL OF MUTES

IT was beyond reason to try to do anything with the dory but keep her head to the seas. I looked at my mate; he returned my stare across the shining thwart, a quarter-inch rim of white around the iris of either eye. Neither of us had ever seen a sea like this. The whole face of the world shrieked with the torture of the tide-rips, for the flow was setting strongly across the grounds. I shook a thumb at the tubs of baited trawl. Little John managed a ghastly sort of grin. The lip of a wave slid over the wrecked gunwale, setting all our gear afloat. Little John fell to bailing mechanically, while I looked out to the east.

The sun reclined on the sky-line like a florid, rotten melon. The *Fortune* was already three or four miles away, a writhing speck over the streaked fields. Only one of the other dories was visible—I caught it on the crest of a boiling hummock a mile to the southward, once, and after that did not see it again. The schooner, too, dropped down beyond the horizon.

We kept bailing all that morning, taking turns with the little wooden scoop, for the sea was very slow in going down and the wrecked gunwale took

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in water nearly as fast as we could throw it out. Toward noon it moderated suddenly, as though a vast and invisible hand had been pressed down over the ocean.

It had been cold the night before—now it was as hot as a day in August. The sun stood up in a flawless sky; not a breath of air moved; the flattened water became another bowl of sky, and another yellow sun burned in its zenith; and we, floating midway between the two fires, broiled in the double radiance.

"I'll row to d' west'rd," Little John said, putting out the bow oars. "Debbil—heem hot day. I tek a dreenk fir'." He reached over for the water-braker, hoisted it over his face, then let it crash in the bottom with a curse. "Debbil—heem *salt!*"

At first I could scarcely realize this price of a carelessly tamped bung, battered about in a half-cargo of sea-water.

"We'll make Chatham to-morrow," I cheered Little John. "We can get all the water we want there."

And then, by some occult process of suggestion, my mouth began to parch like dusty leather. I argued with myself that it was impossible I should be thirsty so soon; that if there were fresh water in the braker I would not take the trouble to reach for it; but the very absence of water in that redundancy of water ate at my throat like an insidious flame.

Toward nightfall I cut off a length of baited trawl, hove it over the side, and managed to hook

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a pair of haddock which we slashed open and sucked greedily. But the salt was even there, and our paltry mouthfuls of moisture were but fuel to the flame.

Then a breeze came from the east, spreading a film of darker blue over the water before it. It fanned our faces and added its soft weight to our progress: it cheered us to new efforts over the oars.

"We'll be there by sun-up," I called over my shoulder.

But another hour and we saw the "easterly" haze drain out of the air and watched it shift by little puffs and flurries into the southeast and then into the south, where it died. We pulled for two hours in the gathering night before it broke again, this time from the northeast.

It struck us heavily—a gale in full violence—cold, clear, dry, pitiless. All through that night we crouched in the swirling bottom of the boat, Little John baling and I laboring to keep her head to it with the oars. When the sun came up at last it found me almost dead with cold and exhaustion, dragging mechanically at the one remaining oar fixed in the stern lock (three had broken in the night), and Little John lying half in and half out of the wash in the dory's bottom.

He began to talk queerly as the forenoon advanced. Now and then I heard fragments of old Portuguese child-songs whistling across his dry lips. The warmth of the day had a strange effect upon me, melting me down into a state of dull exaltation. For the first time I forgot the look of those gray, chattering men I had driven over the *Fortune's* side

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when I was mad. I did not remember that I was thirsty till another evening crept over the eastern rim of the waters.

The night was cold again, but calm and misty. Little John talked all that night and the following day. His mind ran on the mountains—those “mouteens” he had never seen. He was a curious little fellow, with a wrinkled, weazened face that looked as though it had been shut in a box when small and not allowed to grow. Perhaps something of the kind had happened to his whole being. Little John had married too young. I had often heard him making fantastic plans for running away to his “mouteens,” and listened to his quaint conception of what those outlandish regions must be like. He pictured the mountains as huge, geometrical blocks, somewhat like the buildings of a monstrous and unpopulated city, with streams of cool, fresh water trickling through every street. He chattered much of these fresh streams in the square shadows now, in his delirium. His words drove me into a rage. I struck him on the head once with the oar, and he lay quiet for half an hour before he commenced to sing again. I had interludes of blubbering and maudlin pity for the mates I had sent away to black deaths, when I would mumble weakly at my own crimes.

Of what happened the next night and the day after I have no memory. It must have been in the night that followed that another storm came up—a terrific, squally weather, with lightning and floods of rain. The water was good—I can never remember anything as good as that water. Having

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sucked my fill out of the drenched air, I was ready to die. I had no care now what should happen. I suppose that each succeeding flash of lightning roused me afresh from my lethargy, for I have a recollection only of a continuous glare of white, illuminating an expanse of prickly sea, writhing under the rain.

I saw a steamer—a long black craft with a broken nose—belching a column of distracted smoke from her funnel, almost flush with the water amidships and wallowing her rails under at every roll. Men swarmed in strange attitudes over her deck, pitching stinking fish into the sea—the stench of them came to me through the tormented air.

I saw one of the men give over his antics and gesture in my direction, and others gathering about him. I saw a boat bearing down upon me at an incredible speed (you must remember that widely separated seconds were all run together in my consciousness, as though, in a modern moving-picture film, nine out of every ten pictures were cut out and the remainder run through rapidly). I had a dim impression of the dory slopping to the rails with water, and Little John's limp arms washing with it. Then my lethargy shut down and I knew no more.

My next recollection is of lifting a heavy head and staring up a sloping, white washed wall, standing across from me. The wall was pierced at regular intervals by tiers of rectangular holes. Within the lower ones I could make out the prostrate figures of men. Damp oil-clothing lay about the floor and a smoky lamp swung over my head in the center

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of the triangular ceiling, although it was broad day. The whole swayed and shivered with the unmistakable motion of a vessel at sea.

After a time three men came down a ladder. They were all of a type, thick-chested, broad-shouldered, clothed above the waist only in thin, sleeveless shirts, and wearing long-vizored, black caps on their heads.

I had seen them so in Old Harbor—these pogie-steamer men. Many and many a time in my childhood my mother had scared me into sullen obedience with the threat, “D’ Black Caps ’ll git y’,” just as she had accelerated my bedward path with the prophecy that “Pa-Jim” would catch a slow boy.

For in my day they came ashore, those broad men from the provinces, thirsty in every way that a man long at sea may be thirsty, and there was no law or authority in our fringe of sea-town to hold them. When Old Harbor people—the respectable, peace-loving sort—made out a pall of smoke on the sky-line and saw the long, black steamers running in under it, they knew it was time to put up their shutters, lock their doors, and stay behind them. They filled the town and rattled the windows of the winding alleys with their brawling and fighting. In my day there were a dozen Old Harbor men who showed the marks of their violence, and a score of girls whose babies had no fathers—“po’gie brats.”

I looked at the three who had just come down. They seemed to bear no marks of a special turbulence or malignity beyond ordinary men. They

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were silent, it is true, and gloomy, but it was not the silence or gloom of truculence; it was something fearsome and oppressive. They threw themselves in bunks without a word to one another or a glance in my direction. Others came down after a while, and some of those in the bunks got up and went on deck, but all of them moved in this same brooding hush that lay over the vessel like the shadow of death. Even the black cook, when he shuffled down with a platter of soup for me, had a look of one seeing wraiths in the night, and when I asked where we were bound he regarded me fearfully, his eyes showing triangles of white, and mumbled only one word, "Paradise."

So we were going to Paradise then, that fabulous fountain of horrors from whence the porgie-steamers came to harry us. For at Paradise were the factories where their stinking cargoes were turned into fine oil and fertilizer. I had heard much of the place. I wondered what they would ask me there.

And what would I answer them? That was the question which had tortured me for hours. Twenty chattering men had gone over the side of the *Fortune* that morning, and it was I who had driven them.} Two had been saved by a miracle of fortune. Two miracles I could imagine—three, or perhaps four, miracles might have been barely possible among the dramatic chances of the sea—but six or seven or eight or nine of those dories had gone down with crews in them during those days and nights of storm. I lay there staring straight above me and fought it out with all the laws of nature,

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but I could never by any agony of optimism bring more than eight of those mates of mine ashore. The others I had murdered, "carrying things with a high hand."

I could never go back to Old Harbor, that was certain. It was a fearful load that smothered a boy of eighteen, lying in a bunk of a porgie-boat forecastle, bound for Paradise and Hell. The afternoon light streamed through a pane of the skylight overhead—cheery, tingling with the glory of spring—but to me it seemed a sinister finger of flame searching for a culprit.

A portly man came slowly down the ladder. Some atmosphere of authority about him made me sure it was the captain of the vessel. He was coming to question us. What should I tell him? I was in a panic. But he stopped at another bunk and inserted his head. Evidently Little John had come around too, though I had not heard a word of him since I woke. I heard the master ask in a subdued voice, of a quality with the muteness of the whole ship, "Are you off a fisherman?"

I could not make out Little John's reply, but the echo of it in the master's words left me bewildered.

"Smuggling, you say—into Chatham? M-m-m—"

He did not pursue the matter further, but stepped over and glanced at me and then went away, all this time with an air of moody preoccupation that seemed to preside over this company of mutes. But the thing that mystified me was that evasion of my mate's. I was to have no light upon the matter till evening, when we stood on the forward

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deck and watched the night come down over the sea.

"What you so anxious to get out of sight for, Little John?" I put the question after a long silence.

He had been staring across the water at something a thousand miles away, by the focus of his eyes. At my words he turned with an expression of sudden stealth and craftiness.

"You know my *wife*—"

I nodded, though it was not a question.

"You know 'er *mudder*—"

I nodded again, wondering if the toils of some furtive intrigue of his were closing about these two unfortunate women. Perhaps the blow had fallen even now.

"You know," he went on, squatting almost to the deck with the intensity of his discretion, "—you know, dey'd raise debbil-hell if dey knowd I was goeen t' d' mounteens—now—sure, Zhoe—I been goeen—now. Nobody don' know but we been dead, now—eh, Zhoe?"

"That's right," I answered him. "I'm going, too."

A slow breeze came from the southeast, ahead, giving us clean air to breath, and blowing astern the horrible breath of the cargo rotting amidships. By and by we saw a star come into life, low down on the southern horizon. A cluster of satellites grew up about it. Five minutes later we passed a ghostly buoy on the port side, and immediately the vessel's head swung round toward the waxing constellation. A fixed red light burned on the star-

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board hand. To the left I made out the low, gray line of a sand-spit. We were in an estuary.

I glanced at my mate. He was sniffing at the breeze like a hunting-dog on a cooling trail. I had smelled something, too—a faint pollution of the wind, coming over us like the exhalation of a vast and far-away pestilence.

The lights ahead expanded and came toward us. The fetor grew by imperceptible accretions, until it seemed that the very atmosphere rotted, crumbled into a myriad granules of corruption, weighed us down with its cloying stench, and left its putrid silt on the linings of our lungs and nostrils.

A monstrous black creature moved toward us over the shining water, broke up as it came abreast into a tow of two barges wallowing in the wake of a hiccoughing tug. They passed us with a breath of horrible death. When my eyes went ahead once more, we were shouldering alongside of a vessel at dock under a towering, shadowy structure—a gaunt, high, blank, black building, with one skeleton arm that jabbed at the vitals of our neighbor.

The arm creaked, it writhed; an endless chain ran up its iron profile; hundreds of buckets, like teeth, tore at the ghastly burden and carried it aloft in horrible, dripping fragments.

I looked down into the hold. It was illuminated by half a dozen lanterns, pouring their smoky radiance over figures that writhed and heaved and stuck forks into the festering mass—demons in hell, if ever I saw them. It was a moment before I could realize that these were the forms of men.

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Their heads and shoulders were swathed in gunny-bags, upon which fell the rotten rain.

The thing exercised a terrible fascination over me. I looked away at the dock and the oil-factory, black, desolate, dusty, with lanes of little lights leading back into further labyrinths of horror. I saw a long, shed-like structure squatting beside a stagnant back-water, with a lighted "store" in one end of it and the green of a pool-table showing through an open door. In the dark, behind a fertilizer-factory, a toy engine dumped its toy cars into an invisible barge beside an invisible dock. Inevitably my eyes came back to the pit below.

A man with a sack over his head stood on the deck above the creatures in the pit, directing their heavings with powerful gestures and bellowed words. He swore tremendously and shook his fists, shifted his footing like a fighter in the ring, raised his hands over his head and clutched at the air with an exuberant violence that shook me strangely. For an instant I struggled with a memory which I could not remember. The hands he raised over his head were red. He turned toward us, and the face within the burlap was red as fire. It was the man of "Schlinsky's up-stairs"!

"Where yoo been?" he roared to our captain, invisible on the bridge above our heads. The captain did not answer the boisterous question, but asked another, with that austere brevity that had bothered me.

"When 'll yoo be out?"

"Fufteen minutes," the other bellowed back. "We arre boond for Oold Haarbor."

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"Come aboard, Jock, I want to see yoo." The captain had spoken with more fervor than before. Of a sudden I felt that all the lights on board were turned upon me, and ducked behind the deck-house with the heart hammering against the walls of my chest. The soul of a fugitive had come into me already.

"Did you hear what he said?" I asked, when my mate had followed me, wondering. "He's goin' *home*—to Old Harbor, John."

"Let 'em go." The volatile little fellow had already taken on the audacity of the hardened vagabond. "I been damn far gone w'en dey fin' out nuttin'."

"But they'll know about *me*," I insisted. It was horrible to think of cold, hostile, and knowing eyes following me across oceans and continents, forever, till the day of my death in some obscure corner of exile. This red man would hear of dories lost in Old Harbor—he had seen a little man and a huge, hulking youth picked up from a dory—he would put two and two together, inevitably.

I watched the great man come aboard and disappear into the men's quarters forward, heard his jovial hail, unanswered from below. Then I was in a sweat to get off the vessel and into the dark ramifications of the dock-works before this carrier of tidings should lay eyes upon us again. I had no thought of farewells or the amenities of gratitude; I wanted only to get away.

"Come on," I muttered to Little John, and made a dash of it, dragging the bewildered fellow over the lighted rail and across the reeking deck of

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our neighbor, over another rail and into the stinking but welcome shadow of the elevator. I have often thought since then that I managed badly in my efforts for obscurity, but a man in a panic is never a good general.

"Now for solid ground," I whispered to Little John.

But we were destined to long windings before we found it. The passage into which we had blundered led us away through zones of light and dark, past mouths of latticework that breathed pestilence across our path, past glowing doors with gigantic engines wheezing and clanking beyond them: we doubled corners and crawled through covered passages, and came to a blank wall. Then we retraced our steps and tried it again, and came in the end to another blank wall. It grew to be a nightmare—a nightmare of grindings and noisome dust and twinkling lights and blind ways from which we struggled to free ourselves and struggled in vain. We were running blind now, and so we debouched from a passage and brought up in the full glare of the dockside from which we had started fifteen minutes before. And there was the red giant coming over the rail of his vessel, not ten feet away. He was almost as startled as we at this abrupt encounter.

"I say—yoo arre a big un," he rumbled, staring at me. "Where 'd yoo come from?" I was so taken aback that I could only nod my head toward the steamer. At that he seemed more than ever astonished, whirled his thick arms and slapped his thighs in amazement, and I remember thinking

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that he would be the better for a blood-letting. I have never seen a man with such a burden of energy. It seemed forever upon the point of bursting the barriers of flesh if he did not give it some violent outlet.

"On the *Belle Isle*?" he bellowed. "They told me they didn't pick oop anyboody." He struck off his cap with a blow of one great hand, and ran the fingers of the other through the flaming mop of hair.

"Look 'ere," he rumbled, in a tone of discretion which an ordinary man would have used for public speaking, "I'm mate aboard th' *Bangor* 'ere, an' we arre goin' oop to Oold Haarbor now, an' we can poot yoo back there without trouble."

I felt my eyes growing as round as marbles, and a sinking sensation within. What could this fellow know of us—in the name of all the devils, by what mysterious and occult vision could he see the name of our port written across us as the eye of ordinary man reads it on the side of a passing vessel? I could only gawk at him and shake my head. He appeared perplexed.

"What's th' matter, lad? Yoo hov got somethin' against Oold Haarbor—I see ut in yoor face—well enough."

My face was blank enough to read almost anything there. I was conscious that he watched me closely, his shaggy head bent down and only the tops of his eyes showing. I had nothing to say, and for once in my life vacancy blurted out the right retort. "They's somebody in Old Harbor I don't want to see."

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At this his face lost its look of heavy cunning, which became it little, and he burst forth in a monstrous guffaw. Here was a matter the man could grasp—a personal affair—perhaps a fight.

“‘Bout a gurl?” he suggested, hopefully. I plunged into the opening presented.

“M-m-huh,” I nodded.

I have never seen a man of such monstrous enthusiasms. He rocked on his great legs at the mere suggestion of a romance adorned with battle.

“An’ this ’ere chap yoo was—”

“I don’t want to see him yet,” I broke in—“not yet. I don’t want him to know where I am; he thinks I’m dead. I’m goin’ to give ’im a su’prise—see?” Here I managed a portentous wink.

The man heaved with delight. “Can I take ’er a word maybe?”

“Nope—er—hold on a minute—” I was struck with a sudden solution to a problem which had troubled me all the afternoon. “Er—yep—I guess you can. Got a paper?”

He handed me an old envelope and a stub of pencil. Tearing off the name, I scrawled a note to my mother, telling her I was all right and asking her not to say a word of it to any one in the world but my father, for reasons I would tell them later. On the back I wrote her name, folded the bit of paper twice, and gave it to the man. Even with my blunt wit, I knew he would not open it.

“Give it to that woman,” I said. “She knows all about it.”

“I wull thot, lad.”

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I would have gone then, but he held me back for a portentous announcement.

"I'm good at sooch things, lad. I know women. I was in Oold Haarbor oonly once—last year just after I joined on—an' I got a gurl there already." He held me off at the length of his thick arm to observe the effect of this information.

"Yoo'd never see 'er, lad," he went on bellowing. "Ugh-ugh. Yoo'd look over 'er, an' on to soome fat, pink slut thot th' street ain't big enoof for. An' thot's beecause yoo hov not seen so manny women as Jock Crimson has seen. Lithe as a buddin' willow, this un is; eyes like the shine o' herrin'—cheeks to kiss—aye, an' lips—an' hair to run a mon's fing'rs through. Aye, lad, a gurl to mate Jock Crimson to—an' Jock Crimson wull mate to 'er, sure's ever he was born in County Corn'll."

And now he had me wondering in good truth. I had lived in Old Harbor all my life: there was not a twisting lane in all its length I had not threaded a score of times; and yet it was certain my eyes had never fallen upon this being of the red man's boisterous panegyric. I remembered there had been some little fighting in the backstreets over a certain Mamie Sousa the summer before, but she was large-bosomed and florid-cheeked. Then there was Bert Adams's sister, Flossie. And Little John's sister was pretty. She was only fourteen, it is true, but tall for her years. I decided that it must be Annie Miers. I wondered whether I ought to say anything to Little John, but he was already backing away into the shadow, and I very anxious to be after him.

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"I've got to be goin'," I told the man.

But still he held me back. As I came to know later, Jock Crimson loved a big man, just as he loved a monstrous rage or a stupendous fight. He was appraising my back muscles with his fingers and grinning.

"Not *too* well filled yet," he mused. "How old arre ye, lad?"

"Eighteen."

"A boy yet. Give ye another five year, an' lad—wouldn't yoo an' me make a pair with th' fisties? Wouldn't we thot, lad?"

I muttered something about hoping that such a thing would never have reason to be.

"Yoo hov no money, lad. Just remember my name—Jock Crimson—" He had stuck a bill into my hand before I knew it and hoisted his bulk over the rail of the *Bangor* without giving me a chance to reply. I had nothing to do but follow Little John into the shadows. Once I looked back and beheld the red man standing under the flare of a lantern on deck. He waved a hand at us, and in that gesture was all the good will of his huge, full-blooded, and full-passioned self.

Years afterward I thought of him so, bidding two vagabonds God-speed.

VII

A NIGHT LANDING

THE next four years of my life, full as they were of wandering over the earth, of the prescriptive adventure of the seafaring way, and of that inevitable growth and culture which comes of mixing with many men, will have to remain a blank so far as this narrative is concerned. I was upon the point of saying that those years would make a book in themselves, but it is no more true of them than it would be of a like period taken from the life of any poor devil whose lot has been cast in the forward ends of ships.

I parted with Little John in New York, where Crimson's bank-note had taken us. He stood before the windows of an employment agency, where he had just signed himself away to the foreman of a mine, somewhere far away, within the alluring confines of the "mounteens." He waved his "sou'-wester" at me across a river running to the banks with pallid people—a queer, small, alien figure of brown and yellow—pathetic, he appeared to me in that crowded wilderness. He waved, and I waved in return, and I never saw him again. The same night I shipped out of New York on a square-rigger for the passage around the Horn.

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.. And so it was that my most momentous voyage of all came to me first. For in a certain way that hundred-and-seventeen-day passage had more to do with the shaping of my after-life than any like period of my experience.

One of the crew in that square-rigger (it was a motley aggregation of castes and nations) was an old Virginian who, to put it in the literary vernacular, had seen better days. He was a blasphemous and foul-mouthed old wreck, but a great student, given when in his cups to repeating endless passages from the classics.

He took a tremendous liking to me, for some unknown reason—perhaps because I was awed by his drunken readings. One day he presented me with a coverless and bedraggled volume of the *Conquest of Peru*. I hated to hurt the old sinner's feelings, and, since he sat beside me, combing his foul beard with his fouler fingers and watching me out of his squint eyes till I presented at least an appearance of interest, I plunged with pretended gusto into the first pages.

And so it comes that the first niche in my own private temple of fame is preserved for Prescott. I have no doubt that any other book—of romance, history, epic poetry—would have played much the same miracle with me, but by the grace of circumstances and that old, white-haired pirate, Archie Reynolds, it was the *Conquest* that set my ponderous spirit on the move.

Reynolds had an inconceivable number of mangled volumes stored in the depths of his bunk. He had a *Plays of Shakespeare*, with half the pages

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missing, but, as I fathomed only about half of what I read, the balance of things was somewhat compensated; Hamlet married Rosalind in spite of Shylock's stratagems, and I was content. For weeks I lived in far worlds, going aloft and coiling lines on deck only with my reflex intelligence.

After that passage I made two others with Archie Reynolds, the last in an iron tramp. A curious comradeship existed between us. It makes rather a whimsical memory. I left him as I had left Little John, waving across a river of people, this time in San Francisco. That parting was at least momentous enough for me to remember the date—March thirty-first. It has become memorable for other reasons.

Two years from that day I was buying a dog in a Hongkong market-place. The bluejacket of her Majesty's Navy who offered him for sale related gravely how he had brought the animal at great pain and expense all the way from Timbuctoo, where its mother was a "holy dog" in the temple of some divinity or other, and from whence he had stolen it at peril of his life. My conscience was not bothered overmuch by the fact that I had seen that identical puppy with three slaving brothers, all orange and white, thick-chested and screw-tailed, on the deck of a private yacht the day before, so I paid down the sovereign, christened my purchase "Tim" on the spot, in commemoration of his mythical birthplace, and carried him away under my jacket to the berth where my cargo-boat lay.

Another March the thirty-first, and I was sailing out of Havana, Cuba, in the brig *Ocean Foam*, the

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most thoroughly disreputable-looking craft I have ever laid eyes upon.

It was necessity that put me in that hulk, not choice. Too many people besides myself were anxious to get out of Havana that day, on account of the fever—people with money to pay for their passages. And four years had brought me only a vast and unprofitable bulk, the clothes that shielded it for the moment, the equivalent of nine dollars American, and Tim, who had swaggered his way half around the world at my heels.

And so on this third year-day all of us went on board of Peter Bower's dirty craft and sailed away: my bulk, my nine dollars American, my dog, and my memories—because my memories could not be left ashore. The *Ocean Foam* was bound for Halifax in rum and tobacco—according to Peter Bower's bills. But it seemed to me as we bowled along to the north before southwesterly airs that we were making uncommonly far to the westward for a Halifax course. It was not till the afternoon of the thirteenth day out that I realized how far we had gone astray.

We had been running all that day in a heavy mist. About three in the afternoon I happened to look up from a bucket I was mending on the after-deck, and there, straight before my eyes, loomed the stern of a schooner under a trysail which had slipped within the circle of vision as silently as a ghost. It was too far off through the mist for me to make out the name, but I could never miss that characteristic half-moon of words beneath, with a break at the first third of its arc—OLD HARBOR.

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"My God!" I said. It gave me the strangest start to see it there, like an accusing finger protruding from the shadows.

"I never knew 'Banker' to get out this early," was my next observation. I had no idea but that we were running across the Grand Banks, and it was not till we had shouldered past a dory with the vague figures of two men straining in it that I came to the astounding realization that we were very far to the west, indeed. Old Harbor schooners fish one man to the dory on the Banks—all the trawlers work in the Channel. Somewhere, not forty miles to the west through that waving blanket of vapor, stretched the yellow, familiar backbone of the Cape.

Of a sudden the whole of my old life came rushing out of the mists of memory and crowded about me: the ghosts of odors, the echoes of sounds, the wraiths of lights and shadows I had known flickered in my brain; and then I was Tony Manta's boy again, mumbling over the names of places—Snail Road, Shank Painter, the Race, Black Water—and smacking at the taste of them in my mouth.

Evening came down. The fog broke and drained away into the northwest, leaving the sky jeweled with stars. There came a star low down in the west. It came and went, came and went again: a flash—one, two, three, four, five—flash—one, two, three, four, five—flash—one, two—why should I count any more? I knew it already. A flash and then five seconds. High Land.

Even as I watched there came the sound of a muffled order from away aft, and the bowsprit of

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the *Ocean Foam* moved over before my eyes till it pointed at the far-away flicker of light.

Now I was as thoroughly bewildered as a man may be. I made my way aft to where the skipper lounged, half in and half out of the cabin companion. He was a thin, lantern-jawed, loose-jointed man, slow of movement, and with a way of spitting over the nearest rail, no matter how far distant it happened to be, whenever his speech required a mark of punctuation. I leaned my elbows on the house and examined his face covertly for some clue to this business. He caught my look, guessed its significance, and grinned.

"Heavy weather," he remarked, launching a period over the port side. "Got to run under a lee here." This time he favored the starboard. There was not a vestige of cloud in the sky, and the air continued light. I turned again to find him winking and chuckling at me.

To further deepen my mystification, when we had run past High Land, well away from shore, and stood some distance to the northwest, as though making a course for Boston, all the running-lights were extinguished and the vessel wore around to the south.

There could be no doubt of our destination now. Mysterious activities awakened. Two boats were swung out on the davits in readiness for lowering. The main hatch was removed, and by the light of a lantern below I made out a part of the crew moving about among the bales of tobacco in the hold. Presently these bales began to come up at the end of a groaning fall and swing out like huge,

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silent pendulums over the starlit deck. At a crisp order from the master I worried them over and let them go along the port rail. All on board moved with a discreet alacrity, whispering and gesturing like shadowy conspirators, although there could not have been another human ear within a radius of three miles of the *Ocean Foam*. Even Tim, who came yawning and stretching from a nap in the forecastle, manifested his uneasiness at this animated silence by pressing against my leg and whining.

The skipper passed me briskly, turned, as if at a sudden thought, and peered into my face with the same expression of crafty meaning he had exhibited earlier in the evening. He was a different man from the one I had known for the past two weeks.

"Goin' to put some goods ashore here," he whispered. "You'll go with the starboard boat." His caution was so great that he left me, went clear to the rail, and delivered his termination at short range.

Well, I had been a dumb one, in all truth. I looked from one rail to the other. Rum—tobacco. Of course. Had it not been rum and tobacco that other time, when I ran away with a certain little girl and saw a strange sight on the banks of Race Run? Now I remembered every detail of that long-ago night—Helltown's dead men crunching over the beach, the sounds of muffled voices, even the smell of the back-country tracks through which we blundered.

Strange exultation came over me at the thought that I was going to smell the back-country smells

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again this night, even if it should be no more than a faint air of them coming to my nostrils from over the dunes. Why, the thing was too impossible—too melodramatic. No more than six weeks ago I had remembered this strip of sand out in the sea only as the background of a half-forgotten dream. There was a barmaid in London, a red-cheeked, ample-bosomed girl by the name of Lily Thinker. I remembered how I had told her, no more than forty days ago, that I was coming back in the summer and settle down with her and take a chandlery business. And I had half believed it. I laughed aloud there in the darkness at the grim, monstrous humor of little humanity fluttering its ineffectual hands.

But what if any one ashore should see me? I was suddenly dismayed by this possibility of being recognized, perhaps confronted by one of the very youths I had made half an orphan. What if our boats should run afoul of sunken buoys? What if—I called a halt to these grotesque speculations. Our business would be done in the dark—that much was certain.

The skipper knelt on the after-deck, fumbling over a dark object which presently glared at me with one round red eye, like an ember in the bottom of a narrow chimney. He turned it off and on and off again, then, apparently satisfied with its working, carried it forward and came back to stand by the binnacle, where he waited till a flash of Race Point bore northeast by north. Then the *Ocean Foam* was hove to and the red-eyed box winked five times over the port bow.

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The vague, dark belt of the shore-line remained unbroken. The red lantern winked another series of five, but it was not till it had repeated its cautious signal seven times over that an evidence of life was visible ashore. Then a tiny green eye blinked at us, five answering periods. I figured it near Race Run.

Immediately the boats were lowered to the water, the lines running without a creak through well-slushed blocks, and in an incredibly short time a dozen bales of tobacco and thirty kegs of rum were swung over the rails and deposited gently in their bottoms.

I went to the starboard side and threw a leg over the rail, preparing to swing down into the boat, which was barely visible in the gloom below. But when I started to lift the other foot I found Tim tugging at the leg of the oil-pants and whining uneasily. I remembered I had never gone in a boat before without the dog. The skipper came running across the deck, swearing under his breath at the commotion, but when I kicked gently and commanded the animal to be quiet he let go his hold, sat back on his haunches, and howled. In that hanging silence it reverberated like the wailing of a lost legion. The skipper gave voice in echo, no longer under his breath.

“—— that dog! I’ll fix ’im—I’ll show ’im—get into that there boat, you ——, an’ push off.” The shadows of his loose arms waved in the darkness as he made at me, but for the moment I held my ground.

“You’re not going to hurt that dog?” I said.

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He started another oath, caught it abruptly, spat over the side, and peered at me as though balancing his temper with the need of quiet.

"All right," he muttered, getting a grip on the dog's collar and starting to drag him whimpering toward the companion. "I'll stick him below. Now, for God's sake hurry up and clear away!"

An instant later I was in the boat and a dozen oars were shoving it clear of the vessel's side. I could hear the master still grumbling and Tim's whines of distress, and I called to the dog to be quiet. The effect of my cautious hail was as dramatic as it was unexpected. There came the sound of a sudden oath, followed by a groan; something hurtled through the air and sank astern of us in a gray fountain of spray.

"Back water, back water, you fools!" I shouted, falling on my knees and leaning far over the gunwale. It seemed that a full minute went by before a broad, white head broke water within a foot of my hand, but I had the dripping, whimpering dog over the side before our sternway could be checked. The skipper's head loomed over the rail above. He was nearly inarticulate with fury and shook a torn fist before his face.

"Now—now—now—you've—gone—and fixed this night's g-g-game—*fine*—you . . . " He trailed off into a stream of maudlin abuse, hanging over our heads all the way to the bows, where we ran under to fall in astern of the mate's boat. His venom still pursued us, a disembodied whisper of rage, long after the *Ocean Foam* had blotted away in the night.

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Now we rowed silently for a time, the oar-locks muffled with wads of burlap and the oars dipping noiselessly into the black water. I had to strain my eyes sharply to keep sight of the lead-boat, a dozen fathoms ahead. Even this became impossible when the low-lying shadow of the shore dunes rose up to swallow the lesser blotch. But the green eye was winking again, and I steered boldly for that.

It was so quiet that I heard the bell in Town Hall tower, four miles away over the sand, ringing the hour of eleven. And at that I wished suddenly that I might turn back and go aboard the *Ocean Foam* and sail away into the blank from which I had come, and never set foot upon that beach in the shadows ahead. For somehow the notes of that distant iron tongue seemed to me like a wild night-alarum clamoring over the roofs of Old Harbor telling the sleepers under them that Joe Manta had come back.

And then a vagrant air from off the shore assailed my nostrils with the faint night-scent of arbutus, and I knew they would be blooming in the hollow to the south of the lily-ponds, where I had squandered a thousand of them under my lusty boots in the days that came back to me now suddenly—ineffable, bright phantoms of content.

I might have done something foolish then had Tim not created a diversion by planting his paws on the gunwale, peering into the gloom ahead, and growling. I threw an oil-jacket over his head and crowded him down between my knees. An instant later our bow was grating on sand, and a shadow came crunching toward us.

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"More to the left," the shadow directed, in a furtive undertone that brought my hands up jerking, with half a broken tiller-line in one of them. Then I fell to shivering and calling myself a fool, all over a familiar voice whispering in the dark. For the shadow on the beach was Will Hemans, the blacksmith who had once called me "Joe Snow."

I mumbled to the crew, we backed off and floated to the westward till our dim pilot called to put in, and I found the beaches of Race Run sliding past us. Our bow caromed gently against the mate's boat, sending us to bury a nose in the sand alongside.

Men were coming and going—how many of them I could not say in the gloom. The mate's boat was already half cleared, and I could make out the dark blotch of the latest bale moving up-shore upon the shoulders of two black figures. Conversation, orders, directions, all were carried on in subdued whispers, through which there ran a flutter of haste and uneasiness. More than one figure left off heaving for a moment, to step aside and peer into the gloom up or down the beach. One waded out into the ruffle beside me, swore in soft, hissing explosives, fidgeted, and craned his head toward Wood End. He was so close that I could hear the water dripping from the creases of his boots. My father used to go dragging with a man named Antone Perez. This was Antone Perez standing by me now. I hardly dared breathe until he had splashed ashore once more without marking me.

There was another voice among the whisperings that set me to rummaging through my memory for

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a face and a name to give to it. I could have sworn that I knew that voice; there was even something familiar in the vague pattern the whisperer made upon the gloom. I leaned forward and strained my eyes and ears to catch some telltale contour or trick of speech, but still his identity was beyond me. I could get him, and yet I could not get him. He was talking with our mate, angrily it seemed to me, complaining and expostulating. I could catch only an occasional fragment of what he said: "Devil of a row—hear it in here as plain as—What you trying to do out there—raise the whole coast? . . . Wood End station—bet a hat—crazy as—"

He grew more peevish as he went on, and, though I could not hear the mate's replies, they seemed to add to his discontent. He held his arms akimbo and shook them pettishly; and then, in a flash of memory, I had my man. That little gesture of the elbows carried me back twelve years to another night when I saw dark men carrying burdens up the Helltown dunes, and there was a shadowy man who passed, halted, shook his arms in this strange way, then caught up my little companion and ran away with her through the night.

It was years since I had remembered that mystery of my boyhood. But now that it obtruded itself once more, so abruptly and dramatically, I found myself burning with the desire, as ardent as ever it was of old, to know who this ancient bogie of mine could be. And why could I not clear the matter up for good and all to-night? Fortune had made me a gift of the opportunity in an utterly unex-

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pected way. I could just jump ashore and saunter up to my mysterious arm-shaker unobtrusively; nothing unnatural about that. The possibility of being recognized by one of the others occurred to me. Perhaps he himself knew me.

In all this speculation I was carefully dodging the real peril in the matter, the insidious danger which had been stalking toward me ever since I sniffed that wandering air from over the arbutus hollow—the danger of finding myself suddenly out of the boat, running away up the Helltown dunes, and across the sand, plunging through the back-country tracks, and standing under the flare of a front-street lamp to shout the tidings up and down its length that Joe Manta had come home again.

So if I stepped ashore I would be facing home.

But I would know my man of darkness.

But I would be half-way to the break of the dune.

But I would lay a mystery. I argued it desperately with myself, and all the time I was losing ground. Even Tim, fidgeting between my knees at the land-smells, seemed to implore me to be a monstrous fool.

I will never know how I would have come out of it in the end, for at the very moment when I was deepest in the struggle the whole affair was taken out of my hands in an abrupt, unexpected, and violent manner.

VIII

I SEE A STRANGE SIGHT ON A PORCH

I HAPPENED to be seated to face up-shore, toward the Race Point station, and so it came that I saw them before any of the others were aware of their approach. Even then I was so taken up with my internal affairs that I had been watching the little clump of shadow growing upon the fabric of the gloom for a full minute before it occurred to me that anything might be wrong.

Now I did not start or gasp or perform any of the business of alarm. I was calmer than at any other moment of the whole evening. I even took time to analyze the situation with some deliberation, while the mass continued to widen and darken. The advancing party might, after all, be but another detachment of our own company returning along the beach, and in that case, I reflected, my outcry would be a false-fire, a needless hubbub would be followed by abuse, investigations, peerings in the culprit's face, and ultimate discovery of his identity.

I looked about. There were no symptoms of alarm. Figures bent and straightened under burdens; my man of mystery still complained to the vague outlines of the mate. The shadow on the beach continued to approach. I rose quietly and stepped out of the boat.

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"Watch out for me," I whispered to Tim, freeing his head of the oil-jacket. He clawed at the gunwale and whimpered after me as I waded off slowly, taking care not to thrash the water that rose to my knees, lapped my armpits, and finally rimmed my neck. At this depth I halted and turned around, and where the boats lay on the beach I could distinguish nothing more than a stealthy agitation of the gloom.

Tim still whimpered, and the splashing of his pats in shallow water told me he had gotten out of the boat. It was so quiet that I could hear the little waves slapping on the sand for a long way up and down the shore. It seemed an hour of dragging minutes that I shivered there in the water, listening to these undertones of the silence.

"I was wrong," I muttered to myself; and before I could take another breath the night had filled with a tumult of cries, blows, oaths, scurrying footfalls, spattered gravel, the hollow clatter of boots on the planking of boats, and a rattle of oarlocks. A boat came driving at me so desperately that I only saved myself by diving, and even then a deep blade set my head afire with sparks. I stayed down as long as my lungs would hold, and the passage of another hard-driven boat thrummed in my ears.

And then when I did come up my blowing and sputtering came near putting an end to my concealment. The commotion had subsided almost as abruptly as it had risen, only the dying whine of oars in locks and the rumor of a pursuit here and there along the face of the dunes remaining to tell

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the story of surprise and violence. It was all over. And there I was, heaving desperately and spitting salt-water and rubbing my eyes with a great splashing of water, when the sound of a voice not a hundred feet away set me gasping.

"What's that out there—splashing—hear it?" It was the Wood End captain speaking, a man they called "Big Sam." The rain of drops from my hair sounded in my ears like a volley of musketry fire. It was a terribly long minute before another voice broke the hush.

"Yeh, still drippin'. Seems to me I see a dog about. 'S probably him, over on the other bank."

And, sure enough, even as he said the words, Tim's wide head forged alongside of me. I have never heard a more welcome sound in my life than the dog's whimper of relief at finding me. Big Sam gave a grunt, and I could hear the two crunching away over the sand.

I waited for another ten minutes, shivering with cold and holding the dog's head on my shoulder, before I ventured to wade ashore, and then I made a long line of it, following up the middle of the Run till it shallowed to my knees. Then I scuttled across the salt-marshes, moving from hummock to hummock with all the stealth of a tremulous phantom. Once a party passed within fifty yards of where I cowered, fair in the center of an open space. Big Sam was with it. I heard him boasting that he had been the first one at Wood End to hear a dog howling offshore. It made me smile, even in my tight circumstances, to picture Big Sam's face if he could have known that that very howling dog

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was no more than a stone's-throw from him then, with two large hands clamped desperately over his muzzle. I did tell him a few years later, and his face was as good as my picture.

If my breathing was not easier, when I came to the last ridge of dunes and slid down through the tops of trees into the shelter of the woods, at least I paid less attention to it. I threw myself down in a little open spot where the wild cranberry mat grew thick, and there I lay and shivered while Tim prowled round and round the edges, sniffing at the new smells of the back country. It was only now that the desperate case to which the dog's momentous howl had brought affairs came down over me with all its hopeless weight. I was cut off from the sea way by the retreat of the boats, for it was hardly probable that Peter Bower would bother his conscience over the chance of a straggler on the beach. No, the *Ocean Foam* was as far offshore at this moment as all her canvas would put her. I might make my way up the Cape. But sooner or later I would have to pass through villages where there were folks I knew, and the news of it would be in Old Harbor before the night.

I must come to life again, at all events. It seemed to me I would rather do it in the flesh than as the tale of a skulking shadow. More than that, I was chattering with the chill of the night and my wet clothes. There would be a warm kitchen at the little house by the edge of the creek; I seemed to hear my mother rattling the embers in the stove and crying over my coming—and at that I was on my feet and plunging through the under-

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growth, where the runners of the cat-vine tore at my thighs. Then my feet caught the smoother going of a cranberry-picker's path, and presently the Race Road opened before me.

Already I was warm. A stream of air flowed across the road from a tributary wood-path, heavy with the scent of swamp orchids from Paul Dyer's bottoms. Then there was a draught of beach-plums from a hill to the south, and after that the Province Land pines shut in, straight, man-planted rows, running sharp to the edges of the thoroughfare.

Intoxication laid hold of me. I strained out to all these odors and shadows and rumors of the familiar night as a drunken man claws at his cup. So I came past Lem Dow's bog, skirted Joseph Deal's north fence and the field where the circus came when I was twelve, and then I stood at the crest of Deal's Hill, with a trail leading off along the First Ridge, to bring me home about the skirts of the town.

But here I hesitated. Old Harbor lay below me, spread out in a skeleton crescent of lights—more lights than there should have been at this time of night, it seemed to me. I had heard Town Hall ringing midnight while I lay among the wild cranberries. I listened. There were surely many people running near the square.

It was an utterly mad thing to do. I suppose it was the same impulsion which sometimes moves criminals and hunted animals that sent me pounding along the Race Road now instead of through the ridge trail. I could guess pretty nearly what

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it was that had the townspeople up and all those lights flaring in the windows, and yet I had to go at any price and see it with my own eyes.

The square was empty when I came to it by way of the post-office street, a back yard, and an alley, but a muffled turbulence to the westward told me that the trouble had moved in the direction of Town Hall. So I doubled back along my alley, crossed my yard and another, and came out in the shadow of a house directly opposite the side-porch of the Town Hall, and in the rear of a crowd of men and women, some only half clothed, and others in the motley of a night-alarm, and still others frowsy from their pillows.

They all stared at the porch, where the town marshal, Asa Nickerson, bent over the keyhole in the glow of half a dozen lanterns. The steps were crowded with figures: five or six stood about Nickerson, one of these with his elbows bound behind him. Looking more carefully, I observed that some of those on the steps were served in the same way, and among them I recognized the mate and one of the crew of the *Ocean Foam*. Then there was Will Hemans, the blacksmith whose furtive hail had brought me up with such a start, and Antone Perez, Charlie Young, and five or six others—all of them known to me, at least by sight.

But, where was my mysterious shade of the gesturing elbows? I examined them again with a suddenly heightened interest, one by one. No, I could account for all of them. A wave of childish resentment swept over me at the realization that my arm-shaking fellow had eluded me now for a

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second time. "He must have gotten away in the boats," I muttered.

Asa Nickerson had unlocked the door by this time and straightened up. Within were the stairs leading to the basement, the only jail the town possessed. Now, at a stir among the men on the porch, a figure I had not before noticed came into the light. This was Mr. Snow, the rich man of Old Harbor, that pompous, ruddy aristocrat who had moved through my boyhood in a golden aura of health and power and well-being.

It was a moment before I could realize that this was the same man. It seemed incredible that four short years could have drained all the color out of his face and set those haggard lines running across his cheeks and his shoulders trembling with a palsy. What was the matter with the man?

Now I noted another circumstance. I had supposed him a spectator—the prominent citizen come to view a parcel of trapped miscreants. But why, then, should a man stand on either side of him, holding his wrists? And why should Asa Nickerson motion to them, and why should they start to lead him toward the door and he drag back at their hands?

I became aware of a growing turmoil in the crowd to the right. Some one came bursting through; I could see a head, muffled in something white, threading swiftly through the pack, and then there was a woman running up the steps in the flare of the lanterns.

She was wrapped in a long cloak with a hood, evidently thrown hastily over her night-clothing.

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There was not a word or a cry in all the crowded street as the woman made her way to where Mr. Snow stood between his guarders. My eyes went from her to him. He was staring at her like a man in a torment of fear—fear mingled with an overwhelming rage. She raised her hands toward him, I thought in a gesture of appeal, and then she would have sunk down had not one pulled her up and back.

The rest of the prisoners had filed in through the open door: Mr. Snow alone remained of the sorry company. At the appeal of the shrouded figure I saw him jerk his hands away from his captors with a sudden spasm of fury, and then his shaking elbows went up at his sides in a gesture that brought me a yard out of my shadow before I could stop myself. No wonder, then, that I had heard nothing more of my boyhood escapade.

If I was startled at that, I was amazed still more before another ten seconds had passed. The men caught my arm-shaker's wrists again and forced him toward the door, with the strange woman plucking at their coats and crying something which I could not hear. A by-stander put out his hands and held her back while Asa Nickerson went in behind Mr. Snow and his guarders and closed the door.

Then it was that the woman tore herself free from the one who had held her and turned to face the crowd for the first time—turned defiantly, her head thrown back and the hood fallen upon her shoulders, her arms stretched out across the door that had closed upon our rich man.

I should be the rich man, if I could have forever

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before me in its every vivid detail the picture of her standing there, her spirit stripped of all the nice veneer of housed and clothed generations, quivering with a raw and naked passion, violent, unconquerable, unashamed, beautiful.

I do not believe there was a sound among the throng even now, though I cannot say surely. There might have been a bedlam of outcries, and my ears deaf to them. I stared at the little lighted stage across the street, and stared and stared, and wondered who this girl might be—for the stranger was not a woman grown, but a girl at the ineffable moment of bloom. All the time that I stared I was aware of a voice clamoring within my brain, "You know her, you know her—look, man—you know her"—and yet it was not till the strain of defiance broke her and she fell to dancing up and down in a cataclysmic rebellion against all the mute, staring people, that I knew she had only to clap her hands and she would be the child who had set me raging in the parlor in Shank Painter.

"Allie Snow."

I did not realize that I had spoken aloud till I heard a grunt of amazement at my side. An instant later there came the hiss of a match on cloth and a sudden flare blinded my eyes.

"I be a debbil—eet's Zhoel!"

I was blinking into the wide and bewildered face of my mother's cousin.

"Dedos," I gasped at him, "drop that match!" He crushed it between his fingers, startled by my tone, but immediately he had fired another and stared up at me again.

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"Beeg—damn beeg," he marveled. "Got a mustache—got heavy—beeg as debbil. W'y, Zhoe, you been a *man*!"

Then, before I could stop him, he had cried out to the crowd that I was there; shouted it with an elation that left me wondering more than ever. They came pelting up, wrung my hand, whacked my shoulders with an exuberant violence, in a flickering volley of match-flares. I caught a glimpse of Gerald Duarte, and knew that one at least out of the *Fortune's* crew had come ashore alive. And there was old Gabe Young dragging feebly at my sleeve—but I remembered that he had been Duarte's dorymate.

It was all so strange and astounding that I had not a word to answer all their hurly-burly of questions, but leaned there against the wall and gawked about. Another figure caught my eye in the fitful illumination. It was Little John's wife, dressed in a thin, flowered wrapper, and with a woolen muffler wound tight around her head. She looked so tremulous and frightened and irresolute in the midst of all this vociferous welcome that I could not help waving my hands at her and crying that her man was alive and well—though God knows I was only hoping it was the truth.

Then I heard Dedos popping his fingers in a state of prodigious curiosity at my elbow. "W'at deed dey say down to d' creek—eh, Zhoe? I bet dey been glad; eh, Zhoe?"

"I haven't been there yet," I blurted, and ran away from the noisy company down the length of the front street, my head awl with all these

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things that would not stand still. But I was to witness one more strange sight that night before I came to raise the little house with my poundings at the door.

In the alleyway between Herod's fish-market and the clothing-store two figures were standing. I had only a glimpse of them as I ran past. They stood in a narrow patch of light thrown from the street-lamp at the Diggs's corner. The one facing the street was Asa Nickerson. How he had come there so quickly from the Town Hall basement I did not know. In my flash he appeared to have drawn back with a frown on his face. The second figure, with his back to me, seemed almost to fill the narrow way with the bigness of his shoulders. Two huge red hands were up above his head. Whether the gesture was one of appeal or of threatening I had no way of knowing. The second figure was Jock Crimson.

IX

THE TURN OF THE PENNY

I SUPPOSE it should be the aim of every person who sits down to write a tale, first to look well to the morality of all the men, events, circumstances, and conclusions which are to form the fabric of his narrative. But what of the man who, having laid down the sextant and marline-spike in all innocence and confidence and taken up the pen to write a record of his days, finds himself suddenly face to face with the appalling discovery that Virtue leads as checkered a career as Vice, that Reputability often goes about in strange garments, that Good and Evil are sometimes only the way the penny turns, and that Life is forever getting her heroes and villains mixed. Perhaps you will retort that he had better get back with all speed to his sextant and marline-spike.

I shall never forget the miracle of my mother's face, showing over my father's shoulder, when they found me standing in the dark before the door.

Neither of them said much. They led me into the kitchen, and my father, who was always as handless in the presence of emotion as I, went off up-stairs to wake Man'el, while my mother sat down before me, with her knees touching mine, and stared at me without a word.

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"I'm wet," was the most momentous announcement I could manage.

"Yes," she said. She did not pursue the subject further, only sat and looked at me.

"It's been a long time," I said, after a while. Then I was ashamed of myself, because I perceived that I had never known a quarter of that time's real length.

My father came down with my brother, and immediately was in an agony of embarrassment till he remembered the fire, which gave his hands something to do. Man'el astonished me. No one in the world will ever learn to remember that youngsters grow up. Man'el would never approach my bulk, but already, at eighteen, he had come to the stature of the average man. He came forward now, rubbing the amazement out of his eyes, and offered his hand with a gesture that set me wondering still more. I had seen fine gentlemen off of yachts in the treaty ports shake hands with the same gesture.

And then I marked that Man'el had grown very handsome—different from the rest of us, who were all rather heavy and blunt of feature. Man'el's face was smooth, and the contours of his features regular and fine. One had the feeling of a perfectly controlled fire burning behind his olive skin, as a man who might go to the uttermost lengths of passion or folly, but always with his gloves on. One could be certain that he would play the game, not the game play him. I think he was a little ashamed at the bigness of his own eyes, for he began explaining how sleepy he was, having been to a dance that evening.

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But I did not listen to him long, for my head was full of graver speculations and puzzles to be solved.

"They caught some smugglers to-night," I announced.

It was my mother who caught the relevancy of my words. She touched my damp clothing.

"You come weeth them?" she asked.

"Yes. I got away; nobody saw me."

I think she was engaging with the moralities of the case, for I observed her fingers plucking at one another.

"I didn't know what they were up to," I explained.

"Oh," she said, and I could see that she was easier.

"Mr. Snow was in it, and Will Hemans and half a dozen others," I went on. "I saw the station-men putting them in Town Hall. Then Mr. Snow's—" I stopped, for I discovered suddenly that I did not want to talk about that dramatic tableau on the porch. "Dedos picked me up," I ended, rather breathlessly.

There was not a word for a minute or so. I had a vague sense of communications going back and forth between my father and mother, without their moving or turning their eyes. In this animated hush I could hear the dories rubbing noses in the creek, and, turning, I saw Man'el standing at a window staring out at a crescent moon which had come up to gray the night. "They are on their guard," was the thought that came into my head. Aloud I said, "Dedos wasn't as surprised as I thought he'd be. Nobody was."

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There was another blank, in which I was aware of a wordless conference. Then my mother cried passionately:

"But dey come 'bout grave-stone. W'at c'd we do, Zhoe? An' you a beeg, gran' man lek thet—w'at c'd we do, Zhoe?"

"Me—a grand man?" I marveled.

"Yes—an' d' town goeen' t' buy eet 'emselves."

"I don't understand you," I said. "Look here, mother, just how many men came back off the *Fortune*—I mean those in the dories?"

"Teen—weeth you an' Little Zhon."

"Ten. I didn't think there'd be so many. Ten came back—and the rest of them I killed." I was weary with this piling up of mysteries, and so I shouted, "*Say—I killed the rest!*"

And now they looked at each other for the first time. It was evident that they had found a mystery of their own.

"W'y, Zhoe—" my father gasped, but my mother crowded him out with her gust of denial.

"You deed not—you deed not—nobody can say thet. Zhoe, you breeng them teen home alive—an' you done eet—you done eet. Else wouldn' thee gone down weeth th' vessel—eh—tell me thet, Zhoe?"

Four years of skulking in the shadow of a memory, a hundred dreams of shipmates going down into black water and stretching fingers in agony at me through the bubbles, a weight whose awful pressure I had almost forgotten to mind—all these things rushed in from the corners of space and exploded with a noiseless flare somewhere in my brain.

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"Gone *down—vessel?*" was the only outward echo of this internal concussion.

"*He—don't—know!*" It was a unison as precise as a chorus master could have wished. They appeared helpless with bewilderment. It was Man'el who came to their rescue, talking in his smooth, controlled way.

"You knew that po'gie-boat that took you into Paradise—we found out all about it since—well, three hours before that boat picked you up it had cut the *Fortune* half in two. D'you understand?—half in two. Went down s' quick them fellows aboard probably never knowed what happened, exceptin' the watch, an' he run below when the steamer come at him."

So that was why they were all so glum and wordless in that steamer. It is impossible for me to give a name to the thing that was happening in my brain. It was as though a vast aggregate of events, thoughts, dreams, men—all the lumber of a four-tyears' passage—had been shaken violently, like peas in a box, so as to present an utterly new and unfamiliar pattern. But Man'el was going on.

"They thought it was worse'n it really was, because they never knowed till after but what the whole crew was aboard when she sunk. They wouldn't even have knowed her name if it wasn't her stern come up into the searchlight for a second before she dove. Couldn't do a thing; they was some damaged 'emselves—you must 've see."

I nodded. I remembered now. My mother, who had been bursting with impatience for some time, broke in now with gesticulating hands.

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"An' we hear about eet nex' day. Oh, Zhoe—Zhoe—the peeples—the peeples! Fadder see Tony Silva up-street. 'All gone—all gone—ever' las' man gone t' bottom,' he says. I ran up t' west'rd t' see, an' thee's women blubberin' right in street, 'Johnnie's dead!' 'Maya's dead!' Zhoe, eet's terr'ble—terr'ble! Sky fall down—then I come home."

That was all. She had "come home." My father began to rattle the grate furiously, as though the memory of that home-coming must find some ostentatious vent or turn inward and strangle him.

"Really, I never seen the town like it," Man'el intruded, with the easy superiority of the unemotional. "For three days men went around whispering in the front street, and they was women watching on the dunes clear over to the Race. All the blinds down in town. Ma and pa didn't say a word to each other. Pa stayed down to the creek most of the time. Ma cooked rotten."

There it was again—the perfect touch: "Ma cooked rotten."

"An' theen Zherald—" It was my father, in a frenzy to be on, who rushed in. But Man'el shouldered him out with his level tones.

"Then one morning Gerald Duarte an' Gabe Young come ridin' up the road in a peddler's cart. Ma was in the front room and see 'em. She come out to the kitchen white 's a ghost.

"'What's matter, ma?' I asked her.

"'Man'el,' says she, 'run up-street fast 's you kin an' see what's happened.'

"So I did. You know, Joe, them two come ashore at Wellfleet cussin' you up an' down for all kinds

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of a devil. An' there at Wellfleet they found out what 'd happened to the vessel, and by the time they got here—my God!—you was the biggest hero anybody ever hear of. You ought to 've hear 'em go on. Of course I know you couldn't 've been like they said; why, they had you roarin' like a bull an' lookin' big 's an elephant an' heavin' 'em all over the side with your two hands. Honest, they believed you knowed all along just what's goin' t' happen.

"They wasn't any trouble findin' out about it. The front street was packed from Jennings' wharf clear up beyond Town Hall. Y' see, I was little then, an' I bragged around so much I forgot to go home; an' before I remembered, the *Mary Nickerson* come in with the Cook boys and Tony Sousa and Ginger Bragg. They 'd picked 'em up inside of an hour after you'd drove 'em off the vessel. They didn't know what 'd happened either till they come to the beach, an' I wish you could 've see their faces when they hear about it. Pretty near fell down, the two of 'em. When I come home an' told pa and ma they didn't seem to care. Ma took to watching the schooners after that, an' I guess pa watched 'em from the creek, because I see him makin' down there every time one hove over Wood End."

"I t'eenk you come w'en th' *Abbie* come," my father broke out, letting the poker clatter on the floor and striding about furiously. "I see heem come een; I see two dorees come off, jes' lek leetle bugs wee off crost water; I see beeg crowd waiteen on beash—run roun', run roun', leetle flies—"

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"He sent me up-street," Man'el pushed in. "It was Joe Bickers an' Buguna. When I come back an' told 'em, they just set down here in th' kitchen and set and set. They wasn't any supper. It got dark. I see lights in the harbor, but I didn't think about 'em. I never see a night like that. I guess they'd give you up for good. We just waited—and I didn't know what we're waiting for—and they didn't, either. Nothin', I suppose. Come ten o'clock. 'I'm goin' to bed,' says I. Neither of 'em looked at me. I set down ten minutes longer, and then come a big poundin' at the front door. Made us jump. 'I'll go,' says I. But before I could move, come the sound of feet comin' round by the wharf, an'—"

"Oh, Zhoe, you ought 've see heem!" My mother was no longer to be lorded out of it. This part of the story was hers, beyond all the rest. "You should 've see heem standeen there in th' door; feelled eet all up, he deed—beeg an' red an' crazy. Course thet eez, I don' know eef he's crazy, but he looked eet. Stare at me. I'm setteen right there by th' stove—stare at me—shook hees beeg feests in air—blow hees red sheeks out—holler, 'Eez you these woman?' An' then he run at me, an' I was sure he's crazy an' thet th' end o' me. Fadder jes' set an' swaller, an' so deed Man'el. I shet my eyes. 'Eez you these woman?' he holler again. Scared my eyes open. There's heez beeg red han' een front o' my face weeth a paper een eet. I deedn' look. I guess I must 've noddod my head; thet eez, I don' know, but I must 've. I feel lek I never feel een my life beefore. Nex' second he's gone—

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beefore anybody knowed—zip! Jes' lek thet—beeg trompeen an' he's gone—an'—”

She ended with such a queer jerk that I was startled. I looked at her and found her face working with some inexplicable emotion. She was staring down at the hands which fumbled in her lap. And then I saw something which I could not believe I was seeing—my mother blushing. Utterly bewildered, I turned to my father. He was watching me. I have never known whether there was more of malice or whimsicality in his tone when he said:

“W'en she come to, she fin' 'erself een that door, lookin' out after w'ere he'd gone. She's goin' t' run after heem, I t'eenk.”

With all his suave facility Man'el was not the teller of tales that my mother was. He could never have made me see in detail the monstrous drama of that night, the homely, air-scoured kitchen, the three mute, immobile figures, the sudden cataclysm of the great, flaming animal filling the doorway, the volcanic consummation of his errand, the concussion of his departure into the night, the trouble of that mysterious and occult power of his which now for the first time had come to my knowledge. And Man'el would never have ended the chapter as my mother did, with one brief, momentous sentence:

“Then I read your letter.”

There was a moment of silence, as there should have been, before Man'el spoke.

“They didn't know what to make of it. Why, you ought to 've see 'em here in the kitchen, night after night, wonderin' and wonderin' to each other

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why it was you didn't want folks to know. Pa used to come down-street, after he'd hear 'em all praisin' up the great Joe Manta, an' you'd think he'd bust open with wantin' to holler that you're alive. You know them crazy people up-street kep' getting you bigger an' bigger an' more of a hero every day. An' then they was going to put up a moniment for you in the graveyard, an' come out to see what ma and pa wanted onto it. Well, that's too much for ma. 'Zhoe ain't dead,' she hollers at 'em. They were took aback. Wanted to know where you was. 'Out West,' says ma. How'd you get there? Too much for her. She made out something was burning in the kitchen, an' when she come back she said you'd been picked up by a vessel bound out for Californy. And that's all she knew. But after time 'd gone they wanted to know some more. Pa an' ma have set in the kitchen here a hundred nights, makin' up things you'd done. You was mate on a whaler. Ever'thing you touched turned out good. You been skipper in three different fishermen out there. You been to Chiny twict—"

"I have," I agreed. It shook him a little.

"They've had you all the way around the world," he went on.

"That's right," I nodded.

He stared at me with his mouth open. I had gotten under his smooth guard at last.

"For God's sake, where you been?" he marveled. And then I realized that they had been kinder to me than I had been to them.

So I began at the beginning and told them the

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story of my wanderings. You must think how they sat before me, my father and my mother, and imagine how they leaned forward eagerly to catch the last syllable of it. And then perhaps you will understand why I dwelt longer on the bright and glamorous episodes of my adventure and left the grayer ones unsung. It may be that I embroidered a little—perhaps I *had* been a ship-commander—they liked it so. There was that Lily Thinker. What if I translated her into their understanding as a person of some importance in her own country? They looked at each other with gleaming eyes.

When I came to an end the windows were gray with the premonition of day. None of us had changed posture for two hours except Man'el, who had shifted about the room continually, as if in protest that my narrative did not interest him more than it should.

"And then I came home," I concluded.

The dawn came forward with its inexorable rush of cool fire. My father was the first to speak.

"W'at you goeen do now, Zhoe?"

I had been wondering. I got up and went to the window over the wharf. Across on the Truro shore the dunes stood up in a long, low, blue wall, with a cornice of flame. The world looked thin and dry and brittle; even the near water appeared a sheet of some mysterious, pellucid, corrugated metal. I had seen it so on another morning, when I was a boy.

What was I going to do?

I moved to the western window. To the right lay the First Ridge, with its little yellow trails

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climbing over it to duck into the back country—the back country which had one day known a pirate and a desperado and a red Indian and a squire of dames, and all of them sometimes ran home to the little house by the creek, frightened out of his wits by the dark. It was along the farthest track I could see—the one over Pink Hill—that I had run away with a tiny girl who jumped up and down on her toes and clapped her hands and made a fool of me.

What was I going to do? .

My eyes came back to the town. By the fortune of perspective, the whole three-mile arc of Old Harbor was shut up in a little triangle, crammed full of wharves and masts and houses and spires—as if by its own gesture to shield its life and its traditions—and one of those traditions was Joseph Manta. He was the hero of an epic storm, the bright and glamorous figure of a romance, a dream of opulence and power and magnificence, far away in the core of the sunset. And now I had come again, to blow away with the breath of actuality the luminous aura about that figure. I turned to my father and mother.

“I’m going back and marry Lily Thinker, in London,” I said.

X

EIGHT BELLS OF A QUIET NIGHT

I HAD come back to Old Harbor on the fourteenth day of April. Now, on the thirtieth of May, I stood on Long Wharf and watched the townspeople throw their pathetic garlands into the water. But first they had been up over Pink Hill to read their service and lay flowers on the graves of the Old Harbor men who had gone to the war. After the service Mr. Snow had made a speech. The townspeople had asked him to speak because it was somewhat of an honor in Old Harbor, and they were trying in many ways just now to show him how sorry they were for the mistake. That is what it had been—a distressing blunder. The selectmen had found out about it the day after that night in the Town Hall jail, and they had spread the news assiduously. Their discovery was that the Wood End crew had picked up the rich citizen in the back country—strolling innocently. They had been dumb-heads, that was all. Mr. Snow was so shaken that he had not been able to explain that night. A deplorable episode. I wondered. But, after all, it was none of my affair. I had had my fingers in the same pot.

The townsfolk were very serious over their grave-

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decorating, standing with heads uncovered and bowed in the presence of a great, heroic, and tragic act. But afterward, when they had trooped down behind the band, with Ed Cook in the lead, blowing prodigiously into a cornet, one was conscious of a still deeper note in the crowd. Over there behind Pink Hill the war was dead a third of a century ago, but here on Long Wharf they stood upon an immutable frontier and faced a war that would never end till the death of the world.

I shall never forget them, leaning over and dropping their handfuls of blossoms into the littered water. I remember most vividly a little boy who stood not far from me with a still smaller girl, no more than a baby, by his side. The baby howled bitterly when the boy whispered for her to throw down the little bunch of Mayflowers she clutched in her tiny fist. Then he tried to shake them out, and the baby howled louder; he reddened painfully at the looks of the people about and hustled her away out of sight, abashed and exasperated. A moment later I heard Mr. Small, the selectman, drone out the name of those two children's brother. It gave me a queer shock, happening so. I had not known he "had gone" that year. Some one had dropped a broken wild rose near my feet. I picked it up and let it fall in the water for Roy Atkins. I used to play robbers with him.

And then I had another strange shock. I had thrown that flower over as an outsider—a spectator. I had played the rôle of the opulent loiterer in my own town so industriously that it was no longer a rôle. The six weeks since I had come had drifted

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by in a radiant emptiness, and now I was going away again, back to my mythical place in the retinue of Fortune, almost as truly an alien as though this bright interlude had been but a visit in a foreign land. I had played to my parents' story with such a whole heart that I had taken even myself in. I had even begun to invest that casual Lily Thinker with the garments of romance and throw about her the glamorous mists of beauty and position. I loved to hear other people talk of her (for all of this had gone abroad), and I enjoyed the thought of being bound to her by my word of honor. Once I had started to write to her, but had ended by going out to sit on the sand.

"It will surprise her all the more," was what I had said to myself. Thinking of it now, I have no doubt that it would have surprised Lily Thinker.

Now the ceremony of the flowers was over; the tide had withdrawn far out on the flats like an unpropitiated deity, leaving the multi-colored sacrifices stranded among the piles, and the crowd began to heave slowly along the wooden causeway. A slap on my shoulder brought me jumping about to face my mother's cousin, who grinned broadly at the start he had given me.

"Hullo, Zhaoel!" he bawled at me. "You reemember you come my house supper t'-nigh'—eh, Zhaoe?"

"Sure; I'm not forgetting." The Handkerchief Lady's daughter had bound me for this night a week back. "Sure, Dedos, I'll be there."

He slapped me again, fired a parting salute of fingers at me, and drifted away with the tide of people.

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"Dedos," I called after him, but he was already too far away to hear. A sudden and unaccountable longing to hear the big, wide, good-natured fellow say a few more words had taken hold of me. After all, he was the nearest friend I had.

"I'm a fool," I sneered at myself. But the fact remains that I could not help turning to follow him with my eyes. And the further fact remains that I did not follow him far.

Allison Snow was standing not more than twenty feet away, looking at me. My eyes caught hers squarely before either of us had time to do anything with them, and so we stood and stared at each other for a passage of time, both caught in the same trap of embarrassment. Why either of us should have been awkward is a mystery. It may have been because I had become a tradition. It may have been because of her father. Or it may have been simply that she had not seen me since I came back, nor I her since she stood on the Town Hall porch. Whatever it was, this senseless fluttering exasperated me, and yet even in my exasperation I can remember thinking: "How strong she is!" She did look strong. The wind, fresh in the southwest, made a sort of distracted halo of her brown hair and modeled the contours of her straight figure as though she had been one of those Victories that the old Greeks loved to make stone.

I suppose all this must have passed in the merest breath of time. Then the eddy of humanity which had brought her there licked about here again and carried her away out of sight.

Across a little water space to the south ran the

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skeleton of Crowell's wharf. Alongside of the wharf, with a red belly forsaken by the tide, Crowell's packet-schooner canted her masts at a disconsolate angle over the shed. Two days more—three tides, to be more accurate—and I would go aboard of that schooner and sail away to the city and to the rose-colored, beckoning world beyond. Already departure had laid hold of me with its sense of imminence and bustle.

"Why shouldn't I think about her?" I found myself asking. It was a perfectly reasonable question. Why should I not drain the last thrill out of my harlequinade, when I was paying the price of exile for it?

"What a queer look she had!" I reflected, and then I went on: "She's so slim now—and yet she's strong," and then, before I retreated to the symbolical security of Crowell's packet, I had speculated: "I wonder if she jumps up and down on her toes any more."

"Well, I'll be damned!" was my next observation. There I stood, like a mooning scarecrow, all alone on the wharf.

"Long Wharf," I pronounced, with a studied solemnity, "this may be the last time I shall ever set foot on you. Good-by."

Then I walked off, with Tim swaggering at my heels, and found a crowd of holiday loafers in the back room of Miah Swift's store. But before I took the seat which was hastily cleared for me I must step to the window and look out at the oblique masts of the packet beyond Crowell's wharf once more. I have heard of folks who run away and

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suck an orange whenever the craving for rum lays hold of them, and thus effect a cure. It is not impossible that the red-bellied packet was playing the orange that afternoon. Henry Hemans, whose father had "gone away" as a consequence of a certain night-landing, marked the direction of my look and commented upon it.

"Reckon you wouldn't like t' see thet there vessel git away 'thout you; hey, Manta?"

"Guess I wouldn't," I gave him back, with an uncalled-for vehemence. "Mean a good deal to me—out there. Why—"

After these years I can be amused at that afternoon. I must have made a ludicrous picture, sitting there in the midst of hanging mouths and singing the swan-song of my glories. I was like a man far gone with liquor who is mistily conscious that he ought to stop but cannot co-ordinate his members to the mere physical business of stopping. I overdid the thing absurdly, but it did not matter to Swift's back room. The miraculous gift of tongues had come upon me. It is strange to think now that I myself did not know why it all happened.

The first voice to break in upon my harangue was the shrill one of a very small girl who stood in the doorway and whined to Man'el Costa.

"Ma wan's you t' come home t' supper—gitt'n cold, she says—'spas' six, she says."

If I did not stagger on my legs when I went out of that room, at any rate my brain was as drunk as drams could ever have made it. All the way to Shank Painter I strode the middle of the thorough-

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fare, and Tim might have slain a score of cats, unthwacked, for all I knew or cared.

And so I came, a citizen of clouds, to the door of Dedos's house. And there was Agnes holding it open and turning a frown of exaggerated reproach upon me because I was so late. Ever since I had returned I had had an uneasy feeling about Agnes. She, of all in Old Harbor, had refused to be astounded over me or blinded by the glare of my circumstances. Every one in town knew by this time that I had come ashore from the *Ocean Foam*, but Agnes was the only one who seemed to wonder why. She treated me no differently from Tony Manta's boy, and I more than half suspected that she saw through me all the time.

Now a drunken man is always ready to fall into a rage at his neighbor who sniffs the air. I have noticed it many times and smiled a superior smile at the generic frailty. But now that my own head was going around, I felt perfectly justified in my irritation at Agnes's air of wisdom. I am afraid I was not too civil. I am afraid I swaggered past her with very little ceremony, calling for Dedos. Dedos was safe company. The good fellow nearly lost his eyes whenever they fell upon me.

"He's in the parlor with the children," Agnes told me. She was hanging to my elbow, not at all daunted by my boorishness, looking up into my face with that inscrutable smile she had made up. In sheer bravado I looked down at her and said:

"I've got some news I want to tell him—about a ship of mine—in the wool trade."

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"He's in the parlor," she repeated, with a queer insistence.

So I blundered into the little white-painted parlor with a fine tale of a fabulous barkentine of mine that sailed a sea of gold, and there I stood in the middle of the floor where my rush had carried me, and saw my golden sea whirl up to the zenith, along with the fabulous barkentine, and vanish in the smoke of my own consternation.

The Handkerchief Lady's daughter had been smiling so mysteriously because she had invited Allie Snow to supper that night along with me. I have no doubt it was some whimsical sentiment about another momentous meal, when she had bundled two children out of the back door in a tremble, that had set her about this secret enterprise. At any rate, there sat Allie Snow, as startled and red as I. Dedos, without the dimmest idea of what was going on, chuckled with vast convulsions and tousled the two children on his knees, little Joe, and Aggie, smaller still.

"Tell them about your ship," was Agnes's parting thrust as she hurried away to the kitchen and supper.

"W'at about eet, Zhoe—w'at about a sheep, eh?" Dedos wallowed in his exuberant curiosity. But I was staring at the girl and wondering desperately what I was to say. The last time I had spoken to her was when she stood on the rim of a gully, a compassionate child with too long a neck, and I had yelled at her to go away.

"I saw you down at the wharf to-day," was what I managed.

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"Yes," she said. She had herself well in hand now and looked straight at me out of her gray eyes. "It's the first time I've been out since the night my father was put in jail, and I only went because I wanted to see you before you left. It seemed a pity to miss you on account of something that really ought not to matter at all."

She took the breath out of me with her plain dealing. An instant before she had been as flustered as I. And then I remembered she had always been queer about that, even when she was a baby in this very room and juggled emotions as a prestidigitator would manipulate his rabbits. I discovered that I was still standing like a dummy in the center of the floor and vaguely conscious that Dedos had been waving a chair at me for some time past.

"Tell us about the ship," Allie went on. "I've sat behind the blinds at home and heard the people in the street talking about Joe Manta's ships, and all alone there I've said to myself, 'That's the boy who ran away with me once, and we got lost.' And I've wondered and wondered what you'd be like—grown up and a great man. That's why I wanted to see you."

I felt more like a fool than I have ever felt before or since. Her frankness appalled me. I had a desire to match it—to blurt out that I had not so much as a dory-thwart to my name—that I was a vagabond, a skulker surprised by fame, a jackal in lion's clothing. A crazy impulse to tamper with the serenity of that oval face swept me irresistibly on toward words, and I really believe I should have demolished all my fine world of pasteboard then

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and there had Agnes not stood in the doorway telling us to come to supper.

At table I was made acquainted with another of her moods—or, rather, renewed an old acquaintance—for it was the tiny girl with the curls and the gestures, and the hands forever on the point of clapping, who ate that meal with us. I reflected moodily how she had spoiled my other party and was at it again now and in the same way. I was out of it. Allie carried the talk where she would, and she took the children along with her, and Agnes and Dedos followed the children, leaving me to slouch and sulk alone over my food, to wonder why she never looked at me, and to bite my lips over the radiant loveliness of her.

"I've got to run right home now," she cried, when we had folded our napkins. "Somebody's coming over this evening," she explained, to Agnes's pucker of surprise.

And then, while I was still trying to understand the bitterness in me, Agnes did a thing which I think she had had in mind since she asked the two of us to come. It was a part of the sentimental memory of that other time. She had us both bundled out of the back door before I could think what she was about, and, standing on the door-step above us, she whispered, "Joe—quick—run with her as fast as you can."

Instinctively my eyes went to the back fence, and then to the lane through which we had scurried, and beyond to Pink Hill, looming in the waning sky; then they came back and found the door closed upon the pair of us, and last to my com-

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panion. It was the little girl—as miraculously certain as the fact that it could not be. Her face was near in the dusk, her eyes looking into mine with the old alluring, beckoning, flaming challenge to adventure. In a breath she was a dozen dancing steps away toward the fence, and I could see her only as a dim silhouette in the quiet gloom. I heard her voice, very breathless and low, “Pa-Jim.”

It was impossible—all the laws of time and physical change cried out against it—but it was the voice of a child of six that came to me through the shadows. My throat was dry, and I was conscious of something hammering violently at my chest. The night was suddenly alive with the insistent whispers of the back country. The dunes were on the march. I stood where she had stood, without knowing I had moved. But she had gone as quickly. It was from behind the fence that I heard the low call again.

“Pa-Jim!”

And now I have come to the point where I must set down a very shameful thing—the chronicle of a monstrous failure. If only it had not been so quiet, or if only the hour had not fallen just then, perhaps I might have—no—I might not. The truth must be faced: with all my romantic vapors, I could never be anything more than a man of reason. So the hour fell, the night was quiet, and out in the cove some ship’s clock struck eight bells. It broke the poignant spell with a snap and brought me tumbling out of an impossible dream to land upon a solid earth of ships and oceans, of that fragile hero-fame that I was going away to

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save, of Lily Thinker, of the princely chandlery business, and—I am afraid—of some one who was “coming over to-night” to the apple-green house in the street of the three angles.

“Pa-Jim.” There was the faintest flutter of misgiving in it this time.

“You must go home,” I said. “You know you must go home. Come.”

She came immediately, stepping to my side out of a night suddenly cold and dead, and there was not a hint of what had gone away in her face. She was quiet and collected and gracious. The past hundred seconds had never happened.

“They’re so nice—they’re the nicest,” she said, nodding back at the house as we passed out of the gate.

“Yes,” I answered her, stupidly.

We walked hurriedly, both anxious to be through with it. My sense of failure was so intolerable that I felt I must say something, even if the something were nothing, so that I could rattle it off fast to fill up the impossible silence. But I could think of nothing in the world to rattle off. I floundered desperately among subjects, and in the end must come back to her last words.

“Yes,” I blurted, “they’re nice people. I remember the first time I ever saw them together—in the hollow beyond Paul Dyer’s fields. I wonder if you know the place—”

She nodded.

“In that hollow. It’s a pretty place—that hollow—the one beyond Paul Dyer’s fields. [Why did I hark back to that?] I don’t think there’s a

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prettier place in the back country. No, I don't. I—I—your know, I believe I'd like to see it again before I leave—"

I waited for her to speak with a curious contraction at the throat, as though there were a wire tightening about my neck. But she said nothing, only nodded her head and smiled.

"I—I—look here," I floundered. "You know, I believe I'll go out there to-morrow—to-morrow afternoon—to the hollow beyond Paul Dyer's fields."

I found myself puffing as though I had run a mile in heavy sand. I would have given all I ever hoped to have if she would have made some sign. But she was looking straight ahead, and I could only peer and marvel at the beauty of her dim profile.

So we came into the street of the three angles and approached the apple-green house. The building had lost its features in the gloom, but my ears caught the faint crying of rockers from the direction of the side porch. Mr. Snow was there. He was there, rocking in the old chair, most of the time now. It was queer how the insides seemed to have gone out of him since that "mistake." One had the feeling that here was a frail shell which might be expected to crumble into dust at any moment. There was even a rickety, shattery quality to his complaining which crept through the air now.

But I was listening to another sound, the rhythmical thud-thud of boots following behind us. The certainty grew upon me that here was the one who was "coming over to-night." I was taken with a

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reasonless thirst to turn and put a quiet to that insistent thudding. Instead I mumbled: "I've got to go. Good night."

But before I went I must mutter once again, "I believe—I'll go and see that hollow to-morrow—afternoon."

And still she made no sign. She stood before me, straight and slim and beautiful and sure of herself, smiled at me, touched my hand with the tips of her fingers, and moved away through the gate.

I turned back toward the front street and passed my man of the thudding boots. It was my brother, Man'el.

XI

I RECEIVE DISMAL TIDINGS

IT is a curious thing, the birth of a new day, after one has slept soundly. On the morning following my supper in Shank Painter I woke up with a perfectly new-born mind. I blinked at the strange brightness of things; in an unappreciable wink of time I grew from a baby to a man, blinked again, and said, "I'm going away to-morrow."

Then I jumped up and threw open the blinds of the western window. Now that was the initial mistake. The western window opened upon Old Harbor. The packet was there, but I did not look at the packet first; my eyes went to the very core of the town, where the tower of the Central Church hung over the street of the three angles.

"I wonder if she's up yet," I considered.

My mother sang in her peculiar boyish alto over the kitchen work, louder than usual, perhaps because I was going away. Man'el sat on the wharf below, his feet swinging idly over the water. He whistled. I tried to laugh. I had made a spectacle of myself the night before.

"I'm glad I'm not going to see her again," I said. "I couldn't look her in the face."

It rang hollow. I set out to swindle myself with

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a show of activity. All the morning I packed furiously, though there was scarcely anything to pack. I would put some old and useless relic into the dilapidated leather trunk and take it out again three or four times before I rushed to the wharf and flung it into the middle of the creek.

"I'll not have time to go anywhere to-day," I assured myself. At noon I was hungry, but ate little. An unaccountable restlessness hustled me through the meal.

"Eet's beecause you goeen' away," explained my mother, observing my fidgeting.

"That's right," I caught at it. "That's right."

"Now I've to run up-street and—and—see Jimmie Dyer about coming for my trunk," I announced, with a hesitating briskness. "I won't be gone but a minute—see you in a minute. So long—" I was rattling the gate with the last and striding off furiously along the State Road.

I must have been a strange object hurtling ponderously along an open road in the clear yellow sunshine of a perfect afternoon, unpursuing and unpursued. I forged past a pair of peddlers in a covered cart, and could hear their snickering for fifty yards. I was vaguely conscious that the water to my right was unusually blue and animated, that the ruffles of surf were very white, that a fresh wind came out of the glittering southwest, and that the scrub along the inland edge of the road was talking furiously in it. All this impressed me merely as an aggregate of motion, of goings and comings, of hurry.

When I came to the place where the State Road

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leaves off and where, a long time ago, a man came up from working on a bulkhead and hailed me as "Joe Snow," the comic memory of my indignation that day brought me to a full stop for the purpose of laughing. And while I stood there guffawing I found myself confronted by a momentous discovery. Just at my left hand lay the opening of the First Ridge trail.

I estimated deliberately, as a man who is already a fool will guarantee his own dignity.

"Yes, yes. I'll have time just to run over there and back."

It is too bad I had not seen Tim, who was *whoofing* away up the trail without argument, before I spoke. In that case I could have shouldered the blame on him.

Once launched upon my fool's expedition, I rather went to pieces. At the crest of the first rise I waded through a miniature forest of hard wood and muttered, "She won't be there, of course."

Then I descended into a model desert of sand and writhing scrub, with Snail Road crawling across it, and said, "She wouldn't—after last night."

Then there was another hill of hard wood, where my caution began to totter, and a ravine with treacherous walls that upset the laws of reason and my sober pace at one lurch and sent me pounding headlong through a damp valley of ferns. "She'll come—she'll come, as sure as you're alive, Joe Manta."

I arrived at the edge of the gravel-pits, and there

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was the yellow thread of Paul Dyer's road twanging taut in the sunshine beyond. "She can't help coming," I shouted inside.

Then I was plowing Paul Dyer's road like a tow-boat pressed for time, throwing out a bow-wave of sand on the leaf mat along its banks. I came to the top of the First Ridge once more, rushed down the slope of the little pines, veered off from the fields, and stood breathing heavily in the center of the hollow, staring about with a very red face. No one was there.

"Joe Manta, you're the biggest damn fool that ever lived."

My hands were in my pockets, but I had a feeling of them flapping vacantly in the air.

"Well," I railed at myself, "you were so wild to come—here you are. Now the next thing is to come to your senses and get back to town."

Having spoken wisdom, I acted otherwise. I sat down on the blueberry mat.

"I'll wait a minute or so."

I waited an hour. It was the quiet that drove me mad. I sat in a bowl of sunlight and silence, with the rims of the bowl all about me living and flickering in a wind I could not hear. The hush was so perfect that I could hear the commotion of growth, the patter of falling scales, the popping of uncomfortable twigs making room, as though there had been another Dedos, in the small, cracking his fingers at an inert buffoon hunched in the center of the ring.

The sun moved half-way down to the rim of the bowl. The note of Town Hall striking three crept

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into the hollow. I felt that it had come a long way and was weary. And still I sat—waiting.

“Why—oh, why doesn’t she hurry?” I found myself complaining. Then I grew angry and gave her three minutes to appear and counted off the seconds, stretching out the last thirty very long and the last five longer still.

“Now I’ll go,” I growled. But I did not move. I sat there in the brooding hush and waited. Town Hall struck four and five faintly.

When Tim lifted his head and growled it was a shattering thing; one could imagine the tottering of imponderable walls. It startled me so that I gulped.

“Quiet—stop it, Tim!”

Some monster had troubled his dreams. No, it was something blue—dark blue. I followed the line of his nose to the notch. There was something blue there. I gulped again. It was gone. Some one in a blue dress had stepped back out of sight behind the little pines.

The hollow had come to life. I rubbed my hands together, got to my feet, and stretched my cramped legs. Now I no more knew who in Old Harbor had or had not a dark blue dress than did the King of Siam. And yet I was rubbing my hands and wondering what had made my throat so dry. I was destined to wonder for a long time, and swallow, and stare at the empty notch.

“What’s the matter?” I muttered. She did not come again. I was in a pretty case when a fleck of blue behind green boughs had become the pivot of worlds.

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After a long time Tim growled again. I swore at him terribly because he had growled at nothing. The notch was still vacant. Then when he continued to growl I would have kicked him, but when I glanced down to aim my blow I saw his nose pointing to the right. On the northern rim my eyes caught a flutter of blue in a little bare spot only for an instant. Then it was gone.

"God! God!—what is she doing?" I mumbled.

I saw it a quarter of an hour later in the notch where the Province Land boundary stone lies, and again, farther off, in the next yellow scar of the Second Ridge. They were maddening and elusive glimpses. It was too devilish, too infernal in its refinement. I ached to crash through the underbrush, catch her, crush her in my arms and hold her face up to look at me, and demand in the name of hell what she was about. I thirsted to hear her cry out and to feel her body writhe against my arms. And instead I stood like a great, sluggish weather-vane, wheeling ponderously around in the center of her harrowing circuit.

"Next it will be over there," I prophesied, dully, facing the hill above the gravel-pits. I was right. She came out boldly on the sky-line—a slim, alluring silhouette against the placid radiance of the western sky.

One may look back over the passage of one's life and say of this and this definitely—here was a turning-point. If only she had turned for an instant, waved her hand, made some signal after all that racking circle, Allie Snow might have remained an episode. But she made no sign. She came to

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the crest, hung there for a moment against the colored sky, then descended out of sight in the gravel-pits. For the last time that day I said one thing and did another.

"Fool—fool—fool! Get back to people."

And immediately I turned away from the town and stumbled up through the cat-vines of the Second Ridge, nor did my rush falter till it had carried me to the edge of the dunes, where I sat down with my back to the sun.

The dunes wore a strange face that evening. The sun, only a hand's-breadth from the water in the west, cast a thin wafer of light over the sand, illuminating only the writhing ridges and leaving all the hollows cool and blue and quiet. It was as though I sat on the shore of a prehistoric sea, caught by the wand of some forgotten sorcerer at the ultimate moment of chaos and doomed to lie through eternity, inert and quiescent, with the winding coral spume marking forever the agony of its pale and rigid breakers.

Beyond was its younger brother, fluid, alive, shimmering, weaving threads of lace and throwing them away, droning interminable laughter behind the rampart of the shore. A vessel stood to the east with all its canvas set and flaming with the death-fires of the day. It struck me as a symbol of oblivion, a healing minister of space, a builder of bulwarks against the past. Yes, a ship is the thing for a man who has dreamed.

I heard a faint crunching of feet far off behind my back, but I did not turn to look. There are many errands to carry people here and there in the back

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country; that is why there are so many trails. The crunching came and went, as though the walk wound among hollows. By and by a shadow wavered on the sand to my right. I was startled, till I marked that my own ran a hundred yards away in the flat light, leaping a dozen blue chasms before it came to an attenuated head. Still I did not turn to look. I did not want that unknown foot-goer coming about me. The stain on the sand elongated steadily. There was something fatal about its persistent soundless streaming, like the shadow of destiny.

The person who had thrown the shadow came and sat down beside me with a grunt of fatigue. I turned and saw that it was old, man Nickerson. But why should he be tramping about the sand when folks were getting up from supper? He was well-to-do—owned three “Bankers” and a Channel boat. He answered my speculations with his first words.

“Goin’ over t’ the station t’ see ’bout a man.” He sucked his pipe in silence for a moment, then repeated, “’Bout a man—a man—allus a man.” There was a note of whining in it. “A man,” he went on—“gi’ me a man and I’ll give ye riches. There’s White, I had on the *Arbitrator*—drunk himself t’ death. Then I git Sam Colman. What’s he do? Yist’day he comes in with a leg broke along of the rum, and his crew hollerin’ to break the other. Gi’ me a man.”

“Yes,” I said. “Yes.” I poured a spout of sand from one hand to the other.

“Gi’ me a man,” he grumbled on. “Gi’ me a

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man to trust—a man that can han'le men—*an'* himself. Ah, Manta—you 'd 've been the man fer me—you 'd 've been the—" He broke off and lifted his palms in signal of hopelessness.

"I s'pose you'll be doin' *thet* t'morrow," he went on, nodding toward the vessel offshore. "Pleasin' t' be home fer a spell, but a spell's all a man can spare when he's got your 'fairs t' han'le—eh? Well, ev'ybody 'll be sorry t' see ye go, Manta."

I opened my hands and let the sand patter in a faint rain on my knees.

"I'm not going, Mr. Nickerson."

"Wha—what's the matter?" He stared at me with his jaw hanging and his eyes puffed out.

"Just heard to-day," I said, without looking up. "I—er—it seems I went in too heavy on some things—"

"*Spec'latin'?*" He caught at it with the greediness of an old gossip.

"M-m-m," I nodded. Speculating was as good a lie as any.

"Well?"

"Wiped out."

XII

I HEAR NO GOOD OF MYSELF

I SAW Crimson once that summer. It was a sultry day in August. We lay to the east of Nauset. Crimson sat in the doorway of his pilot-house, and I on the rail in front of him, with the painter of my dory hanging from my fingers. We were both idle, he because he chose to be—the best reason for anything the man ever did—I for the reason that all my dories were out and there would be nothing to do aboard the *Arbitrator* till they came in with their catch. Crimson looked more than ever like the fire-god, with a great, square-cut red beard to hide his neck, and his face preternaturally fiery under the oppressive heat.

He had come out of the south at the head of a smoking fleet that plowed past us on the eastern hand. I had seen him sitting so on the sill of the door, waved my hands at him, and then been amazed to see the long black craft wheel out of line and come to rest not a hundred yards from us, her funnel, sitting far aft, like a Spanish muleteer perched on the rump of his animal, breathing straight upward in the unmoving air.

"Coom aboard," he bellowed across the water space, without rising. The rail cut him off at the

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neck, so that I had a vivid presentation of the Baptist's gory head on its platter. I took the spare dory and ferried across, leaving the cook sleeping in a coil of lines forward and Dedos dozing over the wheel-box aft.

"Thot's a fine-lookin' craft," Crimson rumbled, nodding past me. I turned and looked at her too. There was not a breath of air stirring between the horizons that danced and shivered beneath the hammers of the heat; the tide was at the slack, and the *Arbitrator* wandered about her anchor-rope like an animal at tether. She was beautiful indeed with her long, straight lines and her soaring, slender masts—as beautiful as a lovely woman.

"Yep," I agreed, "and a good sailer."

"Yoo spare hand?"

"Skipper," I set him right. I do not know why it should have been—perhaps it was some memory of that other night at "Schlinsky's up-stairs," when I had felt myself so overshadowed by this volcanic favorite—but this was the moment of ultimate pride in my mastership. He was astonished, and struck the sweat from his brow with a blow which would have laid an ordinary man gasping.

"Yoo arre a boy," he roared.

"I know it," I gave him back, grinning with pleasure. "You're a skipper too, I should say." I waved a hand about the vessel. It was his turn to triumph a little. He pointed to the north, and, following his gesture, I marked a smudge of smoke lying flat over the sky-line and circling half-way to the east.

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"They arre waitin' t' see what Jock wull do," he said. "High-liner I was last year an' th' year before."

So he was more magnificent than I still. Here he sat at his own imperial ease, rumbling and colorful, idling away the hours, while vessels ringed the horizon with men in their crow's-nests, awaiting his lordly whinn.

"Sheep," he bellowed, "ah sheep." He puffed and grumbled at the heat and slapped his chest, and I remember thinking that with all his blood he must be boiling alive.

"Aboot thot girl—" he exploded, with a sudden recollection of my romantic attributes. "What about thot girl? Hov yoo gone an' batted thot chap yet, er—Mr.—"

"Manta," I filled in, "Joseph Manta." I had supposed he knew.

"Not *the* Manta?" he roared.

"That's what they say." I had another moment of pride. "I guess I lied a little to you down at Paradise. That note—you know—it was my mother you took that note to. And that reminds me—I've remembered *your* name, Jock Crimson—" I took two five-dollar bills from my wallet and put them in his hand. He did not look down; he was staring at me in a strange way. I had a feeling that he was licking his lips, though in reality he did nothing of the sort. His staring made me uneasy. I looked out over the flat water. Here and there, scattered over a four-mile circle, my dories crawled like gray insects, moving their legs awkwardly. Two of them were already walking toward the vessel,

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and I could hear another creaking very near, but invisible on the other side of the steamer. As I watched it poked a nose under the steamer's blunt bows.

"So you're this *Manta*," Crimson soliloquized, as though his other self were standing quite a distance away. He got to his feet with the noisy abruptness that was his quality and stood beside me. He brought back that other night, four years dead, on Paradise dock, by a gesture of his big, hot hand over my back.

"Yoo arre filled out now, lad. Aye, lad, wouldn't yoo an' me make a pair wuth th' fisties?" And again it seemed to me he licked his lips. The boat which had poked a nose into view was now lying alongside, one of the crew seated, with oars hanging in the air, the other, my brother Man'el, standing in the stern and staring up at the pair of us with a look in his eyes as queer as Crimson's expression had been. There was something in this business of astonishment and spiritual lip-licking that I could not fathom.

Even after I had rowed back and clambered over the *Arbitrator's* rail, mystery proceeded. Dedos was a party to it now. I found him eying me gloomily from the fish-pens, where he stood to his knees in haddock, sorting the catch that came over the rail in an opalescent rain from the dories below.

"What's the matter, Spare Hand?" I had never addressed him by any other title (corresponding to the 'mate' of the merchant marine) since the night I strode into the house in Shank Painter, caught up

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little Aggie, and cried for her to look at the new "spare hand" of the *Arbitrator*. Dedos's face was a study that night. At first he had believed it a joke, because he used to laugh ponderously when my mother "counted ten on me," and say he would know how to manage me when *he* was a skipper and *I* his "spare hand."

But now my hail brought no answering grin to his grim face. The *Bangor* moved off with a great thrashing of water in her wake and diminished over the floor of the ocean, and looking to the north I marked an agitation under the smoky pall of the watchers. Dedos dropped his fork in the pen and shook his pudgy fists after the retreating steamer.

"Damn heem—damn heem—debbil—debbil!" There was such a flare of malignity in his blunt face as I had never seen there before. It gave me an intolerable feeling of floundering in a labyrinth and angered me a little.

"Dedos," I demanded, "what's the matter? He's all right—that fellow."

Dedos looked at me and shook his head, then looked beyond me and shook it again in a hopeless way. I wheeled and found Man'el grinning evilly at the pair of us. I was thoroughly stirred up now by this inscrutable pantomime and moved toward Man'el, but he started as I did, skirted the other side of the deck-house and retired below, forward. Not a word passed between us the rest of the trip.

I saw Allie Snow two or three times in the course of that season, chance meetings on the street, and once at the funeral of the gaunt housekeeper, to

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which Agnes, now my hostess, had dragged me. I shall always remember that dismal function in the apple-green house with distaste. Allie, subdued and walled about with the formalities of emotion, was a stranger to me. She was not meant to have walls about her spirit.

I say Agnes was my hostess now, for I had taken up my quarters in Shank Painter after my first trip in the *Arbitrator*. The vessel was moored off the up-street end of town, she drew most of her crew from that quarter, and the Creek, four miles down-shore, was hardly feasible in my present circumstances. I am afraid there may have been another reason for the shift. I have never been one to air my frailties in public more than necessary, and here it is not a sense of duty or a conscience clamoring for the confessional which drives me to expose sores, but simply that my narrative will not stand up without some explanation of the weaknesses to which its hero—that is, myself—is subject.

Now when I came into command of the *Arbitrator*, by what fortune the reader has seen, I must immediately swell up like a frog at his singing, cover my head with a stiff hat and my face with the frown of a man of weight in the community. And a man of weight does not live under his father's roof. A man of weight has a place of his own; he lives in some comfort, surrounded by his own possessions. He has some books and a few gewgaws. When there is a knock at the door he knows for whom the caller is seeking. I overheard a man saying to another in front of Swift's store: "I'm going down to Tony Manta's to see Joe." It was the following

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day that I went up to Shank Painter and bargained with Agnes for the corner room with an outside door, "Jewing her up" on the price, to mutilate a phrase of my boyhood.

There I installed myself and my dog and my few belongings, and in that neighborhood I stalked about, supremely conscious of the fact that the onlookers beheld in me the youngest skipper that ever ran in the Old Harbor fleet and the first "ginny" to pick a schooner crew in the Cape. It was on these walks that I sometimes met Allie Snow, for she had not come to the house since I took up my abode there, at least not while I was ashore. I wondered, when she bowed to my bow, if she realized my magnificence.

Then one September evening I stood behind a certain bush and performed the same miracle which a toy balloon performs when pricked with a pin. It was only made the harder to bear by the fact that I was feeling especially grand and important that evening, having landed that afternoon from a "high trip"—the highest, I believe, that was registered in our fleet that summer, and one that put the *Arbitrator* well up with the leaders. I had blundered into a big run of haddock the second day out, stocked nearly ninety thousand pounds in three "sets," and made the market the evening of the fourth day. There were plenty of men in Old Harbor who growled at the "ginny skipper," now that my aura had waned with my mythical riches. I would show these grumblers. I dreamed dreams.

So my walk of this evening led me into the street of the three angles. I had never come this far

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before, but to-night my overweening pomp gave me a taste for adventure. She might be standing at the gate. I might stop and pass the time of evening with her. I wore a new suit of gray. Tim was fine and fidgety in a new studded collar. I could imagine myself calling over her shoulder to the old man on the porch something about "Fifty-six dollars to the man." No share like that had been divided in Old Harbor that season.

I did not realize how strongly this little program had taken hold of me till I drew near the gate and heard voices coming out of the darkness from the direction of the steps. Some other caller, with a program of his own, had made an earlier start.

There was nothing for me to do but turn about and go back. Since I had found myself forestalled I was desperately afraid lest some one should see me. Men of weight are not caught in such a predicament. But Tim, all innocent of the painful turn of events, pattered on toward the gate, his ears cocked interestedly toward the voices on the steps. I doubled up in the shelter of a bush and hissed at him, shook my fists after his wagging back, and cursed him in whispers for a block-headed blunderer.

I could hear Allie's voice from my precarious haven, protesting gently against something the other was saying. I tried to catch some note of the other's voice, but he spoke too low for me to hear at that distance. Allie continued to ward the visitor off. I could tell by the bantering in her tone that she was using a laughing weapon. But her opponent seemed persistent. I could catch the murmur of his assault now, smooth, obdurate,

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relentless, not to be shaken off. Tim had reached the gate, peered in, and looked back at me with his stumpy tail flapping. I presume his sociable soul wondered at my skulking there when there was company to be had within.

There was no use in trying to stop him. I decided I had better retreat before he was observed and my own presence suspected, and I was in the act of backing cautiously out of my bush when there came an abrupt scraping of feet on the steps and my stranger got to his feet.

"Well," he said, "so you don't think you like me, Allie?"

Now I knew. It was Man'el.

"But I do like you, Man'el—very much."

"You know what I mean. And you don't think I know how it happens you don't—eh, Allie?"

"What do you mean?" Allie's bantering tone had gone.

"Oh, everybody knows you're after bigger fish, Allie. You haven't made any secret of it. I seen you. You run to bulk in your tastes, eh?"

There was not a hint of venom in his tone. It was as casual as though he were commenting on the run of cod. And so it was the more poisonous. Allie's answer was low, but not casual.

"Man'el, that is an absolute lie."

"I was mistaken, then." He could not have chosen a better set of words and intonations than that to affirm that he was *not* mistaken. Allie's voice was no longer low, but pitched beyond her own control, when she cried out against him.

"Oh, oh, if you only knew how I hated him! If

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you only knew how I loathed him—how I loathed his bigness, how I loathed his strength, how he makes me shudder when I think of him. Ugh! But you can't understand, Man'el—you can't see why."

"Um-m-m," murmured Man'el, the actor, utterly unshaken.

But a certain man of weight in the community was shaken and sneaked away down the lane, while his dog went and wagged a traitor tail before the steps of the apple-green house.

"You can't see why—you can't see why." I could not rid my head of that. I was like my brother, then. I was not her kind. I was a "ginny," and I could not understand, therefore, why she hated me. I sat on my bed in a bolted room—that room I had been so vain about—and its walls seemed to advance upon one another to crush me in a horrible, close cell.

"You can't see—" Ah, but I could see now. If only I had something to tear in little pieces, somewhere to run, something to batter— Tim's scratching took me to the door, and when I saw the blackness out of doors I went out as I was, hatless and coatless, and dove into the back country, where I blundered about in the brush for an hour, whipping some of the bitterness out of me under the stinging boughs.

I came to a little hollow behind Cold Storage fields and looked down into it with a pang of recognition. The sand had already begun to bury my boulder, but I could still see the upper part of it in the gloom of the gully. I remembered how

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she had stood above me, wringing her hands and maddening me with her compassion, and at that I slid down and beat my fists against the cold stone. Then I got down on my knees and strained at it with my shoulder. I was possessed of a mad desire to hustle it back again to its perch on the bank, as though by that symbolical stroke I might wipe her out of my memory. But the sand had clogged it too firmly, and with all my crazy grunting and heaving I could not stir it in its bed. It did tire me out, though, and that was what I wanted. I went home and slept.

The next day was a Sunday. Sunday is a parade day in Old Harbor; every one goes out in his best clothes to walk up and down the front street or lean against the shop-fronts in the square and watch the rest walk up and down. A week ago it would have been a day of days for my strutting. But now I had no taste for it and turned up Shank Painter and into the woods.

And after the way of fortune, now that I was so anxious to avoid Allie Snow, I must meet her. I came upon her so abruptly out of a wood path that there was no chance to get away, so there we were sauntering out the Race Road together as casually as though I had never stood eavesdropping in the lee of a bush or she been confronted by an orange-and-white bulldog slavering at her steps of an evening.

I paced along in solemn silence, for I could think of nothing in the world to say. Now and then I observed her covertly from the corners of my eyes. But there was nothing there for me to see, no trace

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of embarrassment or repression. She must have seen Tim the night before. I could have sworn I had heard her speak his name. And yet she called him to her when he and I came out of the wood path, took up his fore paws and patted his head. It puzzled me. At least she might have avoided Tim.

She was in a radiant mood to-day, the girl who danced and clapped her hands. She would never stay with me; my stolid progress was not hers; it was rather with Tim that she took her walk, flickering here and there, pointing a fearful finger into the gloomy copses to the dog's clamorous delight. I, with my plodding, cumbersome spirit, could never keep up with Allie Snow's moods. She had said she was New England. It was a lie. That barren soil had never touched her. She threw back farther to the South than I—if to be Southern means to be swept with swift chords under the passionate fingers of the senses. I turned this over bitterly as I tramped along behind the joyous pair, Tim beside himself with his campaign against the monsters, the girl unutterably lovely in the streaming pattern of the sun and leaves.

So we came up the slope of the first dune, and there where the road ducks over to drop into the flat country about Race Run is a bench, which faces the sea two miles to the north. Here we sat and rested, for the going is heavy after one has passed the lily-ponds. Allie was still in her dancing mood, and still at her game of entertaining Tim, who ran around and around the bench with delirious outcries while she made a pantomime of mortal terror.

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As on another day, I saw a vessel far offshore and standing to the east. And now I wished that I had gone away in Crowell's schooner the day I had planned to sail. This laughing girl at my side had made a fool of me—or, rather, she had sat quiescent and watched me make a fool of myself. How my antics must have made her smile! It is an amusing thing to see a fox-terrier perform his tricks, but when an elephant goes through the same antics the spectacle becomes excruciatingly comical. I eyed her furtively. No, she was beyond my fathoming. If there was any mockery there it was too well hidden for my eyes to detect. I would have said it was happiness—just sheer, untrammelled, singing, dancing happiness.

Allie was looking at the vessel offshore. I suppose she had seen me glooming over it. "Why didn't you go back to England, Joe?"

The question, coming so abruptly out of her play with the dog, caught me without an answer. I continued to stare at the vessel.

"Wasn't there a girl or something—?"

I wondered if she were playing with me now as better sport than the dog. She had put me in a corner where I must deliver an answer—the elephant must dive through the ring or be goaded off-stage.

"There never was such a girl," I blurted out—"at least, not in that way."

"Oh," I heard her gasp, and then, "Oh, Joe—"

I wheeled, astounded by her tone.

She *was* happy—nothing in the world could make me believe she was not overwhelmingly happy.

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Yet she could not be happy—nothing in the world could change that sore fact.

“Allie,” I started. I was going to ask her why she had made that circle about the hollow and never turned to give me a sign, but even as I spoke the first word I was shocked by the look that had come into her eyes. She had been flushed with the walk and her riotous play; now, while I had turned away a moment, her face had grown pale and fixed. She seemed cold in the midst of a warm evening. It seemed to me that she was in terrible fear of something.

I had noticed the smoke on the sky-line before and had thought nothing of it. “What’s the matter?” I asked.

“Nothing,” she murmured. But she did not take her eyes from the dingy vapor. I could only sit there beside her, dumb and wondering, and watch the long, low-lying black hulls grow out of their own smoking breath and run down toward the Race like a pack of lean and silent wolves.

“Po’gies must have set into the bay,” I said, after a long time. I could think of nothing else for breaking the unbearable quiet.

“Shall we go home now?” she asked, getting up and moving into the road.

XIII

YOUTH

THERE was no reason for the last trip the *Arbitrator* made that winter other than the reason of Youth. It was too late, too hazardous—a foray into the lines of Chance at the overweening command of Youth. I had a young crew, that first year in the *Arbitrator*. All the young and lusty fellows had come when I took over the vessel, drawn by my fabulous character of adventurer; they loved the game of it, most of them. With Dedos snapping me on I had driven them in all weathers. A fair amount of luck and the sea-wise head of my broad “spare hand” had put us in with surprisingly good runs of fish, and now, in the middle of December, we were fighting high in the fleet reckoning.

There was no contest for “high liner” that year. Old man Bickers, “high liner” every consecutive year since the *Fortune* dove to the bottom with Mike Kensey, had “salted it down” early in September with four “high trips” running and laid off for the winter the first day of December with eleven hundred and five dollars to the man—that is how we reckon in Old Harbor—the share of a doryman for the season. A high season, even for those days, eleven hundred and five.

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The *Arbitrator* was the last of the fleet out that year—the *Arbitrator* and the *Mary Sedgwick*. We came down from the City together on the twenty-second of December, a snickering lot of us and a scowling lot of them. We left an hour behind and caught them at the Race, where they swore at us over their rail when we opened ahead of them.

It had been a grueling fight for that second place, and that morning's market had given us a bare seven dollars' lead over them, but a lead—that was enough. They make more of this matter in Old Harbor than in some towns I know. "High liner for such or such a year" behind a captain's name is a title as proudly worn with us as a lordlier one in a land of God-given kings, and even the seconds and thirds are remembered.

The Cove was a forest of barren masts when we came in, all the fleet together for the first time in ten months. We entered in all the state we could muster, a Union Jack at the stern and pennants at the mastheads. It was a great day. The men cleared out their bunks, piled the dories high with their belongings, and swept across the Cove in a singing phalanx.

I walked down-street with Dedos and Man'el, the rest of the men stringing along behind us and dropping off at their corners where the women and children waited. At the mouth of Shank Painter Allie Snow came toward us. She had been to see Agnes. It was evident from the sudden light in her face that she had not known we were come.

"Uncle Dedos!" she cried, and then she was

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dancing on her toes. "I'm glad you're home—in time for *Mene Jesus*. Agnes and I are going down-street to *Mene Jesus*, and now you're home *you'll go*."

It gave me a queer pinching at the throat to see her standing there so lovely in the triangular frame of the little up-ended lane, when I had been at sea so many days. She was so frankly glad of life.

She had thrown her arms out with a gesture of imperious youth that made me wince when she appealed to Dedos. Dedos loved it. I think this girl was as much to him as any child of his own. But after his own manner he must frown and rub his hands and shake his head and pout. He snapped his fingers at us, a little behind him.

"Dey's younger fellows 'n me t' go," he chuckled.

Allie turned to us, but she was not so easy now. She and I had been uneasy together for a long time—an uneasiness for which I could not find a name or character—a fluttering of something in the air forever approaching and never appearing. I was never so good at acting as she; I could not face her now in company, but stared away at the neighboring roofs and pretended I had not heard.

"Oh, we'll be going the rounds, all right, Allie."

Man'el had spoken, with the perfect intonation to suit the occasion. I observed that he pulled his sleeves down to hide the gurry sores on his wrists. I wondered bitterly why I could not do it. For the moment I hated his ease and smooth speech and blustered away to the house without another word to any of them. But that night before I slept I thought of *Mene Jesus* and Allie Snow. Yes, I would be there.

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I was not to sleep long that night. There came a thundering at the door before midnight, and when I had tumbled out and opened it, rather dazed by the violent awakening, I found Man'el, breathing hard.

"They gone," he panted. It was the first and last time I ever saw him excited.

"Who?" I demanded, still dazed.

"*Mary Sedgwick*. Cleared about two hours ago."

"Well?"

"Going t' let 'em beat you out, eh?"

Here was the reasoning of Youth:

"Get the men." I felt behind me in the dark for my clothes.

"They're here. See 'em?"

I looked beyond him and saw a knot of shadows in Shank Painter.

"Bait?" I speculated, with one boot stuck over my heel.

"Listen."

I heard a whistle blaring down-street.

"Cold Storage callin' their crew—I tumbled 'em out on my way up."

Dedos was grumbling at my back, having come from his bedroom prepared for conflict with marauders.

"All aboard, Spare Hand," I called to him. "Tumble up. The *Mary's* put out to beat us."

"Never go." It was the croaking of age. "Beeg gale comeen. Beeg damn gale—one day—two day."

We would hear no more of it; we hustled him out to the beach, rolled the dories over with a splashing

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and clattering, pulled away over the dark water to the cluster of lights where the crew from Cold Storage were already heaving in our bait. This was the night of Youth, and Dedos's evil day was far down behind the placid horizon.

No one turned in. We were abreast of High Land when the sun came up into a blue dome of sky. We flashed across a glittering sea, the thermometer climbed from thirty-nine to forty-seven, the glass continued high.

"Fine fair weather, Spare Hand." I bawled it the length of the vessel, and Man'el jeered the dismal oracle in a maddening monotone. Dedos scowled and shook his head, popping his fingers at the north.

"Beeg breeze—debbil-damn beeg one—he come."

We made a "set" that noon. It was as fair a day as I have ever seen. A steady breeze from the southwest sang in the rigging; the floor of the ocean chattered and ran its flickering jewels into the north. Dedos steered while I lounged on the taffrail, and so we waddled on our course, back and forth along the four-mile crescent of our dories, and every boat we shouldered past was taking fish. I bawled at them, waved my arms, cheered. Dedos slouched on the wheel-box and continued to shake his head.

We took over thirty thousand pounds that "set," mostly steak cod. A sense of vibration and restlessness pervaded the vessel after the catch was cleaned. It seemed as though the tide would never come to the "slack" again. That day I was young.

The next day I was old. It came in the night—

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from whence, how, why, I cannot say. I imagine that had I been a monk in a cell it would have been "given me in a dream." But I was not asleep. On the contrary, I was staring awake. I have had the same thing happen to me twice since then, once in the Caribbean and once before the September gale off Block Island. Perhaps the ghosts of my seafaring fathers walked. That seems to me as plausible a reason as any for my suddenly jumping up in the middle of the night, scratching a match, and peering fearfully at the barometer.

"I'm crazy," I muttered to myself. "That old fool's croaking has got my nerves." The glass continued high.

I crawled back under my blankets, determined to sleep, but sleep was gone for that night. My state-room seemed stuffy. I dressed and went on deck, wandered about restlessly, peered at the starlit sky, sniffed suspiciously at the easy breeze, turned an ear to the silence hanging under the horizon. My nerves had come to a bad state. I lit a pipe, then dropped it on the deck in my start at a silent figure leaning on the bow-rail. I rushed up to Maya Viera, whose watch it was.

"Who's that?" I demanded. Maya must have thought his commander had become unbalanced, from the look he gave me.

"Dedos," he said. "He's been up t'ree time a'ready."

Feeling more of an idiot than ever, I sneaked below to my blankets once more. It was of no use. Dread stalked the narrow room and panic plucked at me with weightless fingers. There was a vast

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and soundless booming away over the horizons. I heard a rattling and thudding above me, sprang out of my bunk, rushed on deck, and found the crew tumbling out for the baiting. There was not a shred of mist in the sky, the breeze had dropped to a wandering breath, it was growing warmer. Man'el was baiting near me.

"We're goin' to get fish this day, Joe. You watch." Then he squinted at me. "What's the matter—sick, Joe?"

I found that I had no hat or coat on, and decided I must look rather wild and haggard. Dedos stood with his back to me, glooming at the northern sky. I went below and remained there till it was time to put the dories over.

After that I was more tormented than ever. I had a wild impulse to rush below, drag out the fog-horn, and call back the boats that had faded out into the night.

"Dedos," I called. And then when he answered my hail I gave him a weak "Nothing—never mind." I had almost spoken of the fog-horn. I put myself as far from him as I could. I wanted to talk with him, and yet I could not face him. Above all things, I wished that the dories were back.

At five o'clock I went down and examined the barometer. It seemed to call me, no matter how far away I went. It stood where it had stood for thirty hours.

"What's the matter with you?" I demanded of myself. I had no answer and clattered on deck again.

A little before six I sneaked down another time.

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I lit a match and peered at the glass. The flame crept down and scorched my fingers. I fumbled for another, scratched it, squinted down at the frail cylinder.

"My God in heaven," I wondered. It had dropped ten points in fifty minutes.

I believe I never before or since got my hulk up a ladder so fast as I managed then.

"Dedos," I bawled. "We got to get those dories aboard. Lend a hand here—" I was fumbling at the catch of the fog-signal when he came running.

"Dorees?" he wheezed. "Dey comeen' now. Viera's on port side now. W'at's matter weeth you, Zhoe—you seek?"

It was the identical phrase of Man'el's. I paid it no attention, but ran forward and stood in the waist, waiting for the boats to come in. It seemed to me they would never grow out of the gloom. I counted them as they edged in, crept in, loitered agonizingly over the water which grayed with appalling speed before the coming day. I heard the rain of their fish coming into the pens; mechanically I dodged the dories as they swung inboard and settled in the nests, and still I waited for the last to come. It was Man'el's dory. I was watching from the port side when they came up on the starboard, and they were close to the vessel before I marked them. I leaned over the rail and bawled through cupped hands: "Man'el—hey—hook onto the falls—right away—never mind your fish."

I can remember the whites of his eyes as he stood in the swaying boat staring up at me.

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"What the hell—" He spit over the side and stared at his mate.

"You heard what I said," I bellowed. "Hook up—hook up—" I reached over with a gaff, hooked under his gunwale, and brought the boat crashing against the side so violently that both of the mates sprawled among their catch.

"Hook 'em up," I yelled to the dazed crew; "then stand by the fore-halliards." Grabbing up the cook's hatchet from a bucket I ran into the bow. We were riding on a hemp cable. I parted it with a dozen strokes, letting three hundred dollars in line and anchor go to the bottom.

I never wish to pass another morning like that. We drifted to the northwest; it was really no more than drifting, with the wind so light that it hardly filled the sails. We crawled across a glassy sea beneath a glassy sky. The thermometer rose steadily, the barometer continued to fall. I was now thoroughly ashamed of my exhibition at dawn. I could not face the men. I could not stay below. The crew whispered that morning, and grumbled and speculated. Man'el approached me several times, but I waved him off with a scowl, and he retired to a knot of his whispering mates. Dedos appeared to study me, shaking his head now at me. I was ashamed, and yet, all the time that inexplicable craving for hurry gnawed at me.

A little after twelve, noon, the vessel gave over its whispering and shouted aloud, cheered, shifted in an instant from glum suspicion to vociferous confidence. Off on the horizon, on our port beam, a fleck of white broke the blue. It was the *Mary*

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Sedgwick with all her canvas set, crawling to the north. It is an actual fact that those men cheering about me believed I had had some occult warning of the movements of another vessel, twenty miles or more away; that I had seen her anchor coming up, her sails set, her bowsprit wheeling toward the market—all this in the dark hours of the morning.

"You can't git ahead of him," I heard from one of the morning's grumblers.

It was a race—a race which meant the cream of the market—a race of snails. Through the afternoon we closed up upon them by imperceptible degrees of faster drifting. We spread more canvas than they, that was all. The air was almost sultry. At three o'clock we had come astern of them. Through the glasses I could make out their men massed in the stern watching us. Our own packed so tightly into the bows that *Dedos* had to order a part of them aft.

I alone in all the vessel had no interest in the race. My brain was sick with a strange disorder. I was terrified by shadows in the midst of warm and brilliant light. I felt the horizon creeping in; the hours dragged; the glass went down. That slender clouded cylinder fascinated me, held me with a horrible mesmerism. My journeys to my state-room became more and more frequent as the afternoon wore away. I felt as I imagine one on a pleasure party might feel possessed of a secret knowledge of an infernal machine ticking off the seconds in the ship's internals. We lifted *High Land* at four-twenty. The *Mary* led us by only a

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dozen lengths. The crew swung their caps and cheered. I sneaked below like a tippler to his secret bottle. The glass stood at twenty-eight-two. I remembered old men's tales of the Africa gale—how the glass stood at twenty-eight-two. I could stand it no longer.

"Dedos," I called from the companion, "below here."

"W'at I tell you?" he grunted, when he had examined the glass. "But any wee, we beat dat *Maree*—eh, Zhoe?" There was a light in his eyes that I did not like. It had not been there yesterday.

"But look here, Dedos—"

"We beat heem—you bet."

It had gotten into his blood then. It was curious how completely we had traded positions.

It was as warm as a day in May when I came on deck again. We were abreast of High Land and no longer moving. The wind had fallen dead. We lay there an hour, bobbing in company with the *Mary*, so near now that taunts and counter-taunts would carry across the water. I was afraid of this breathless hour. The barometer sank to twenty-eight-two. No man in the Cape had ever seen it there before. I whispered it to Dedos. He popped his fingers in the air and cursed the calm that held us from the game. I gave him over in disgust for a light-headed fellow.

At six there came a sudden ruffling over the water, and an air from the southeast drove us beyond Peaked Hill. The men were in hilarious spirits. The air subsided, came abruptly from

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another quarter, jibed our sails and drove us on. The City was forty miles ahead. It looked as though we should beat the *Mary* easily.

But the sickness of my brain had done its work. I found myself muttering against the festival spirit. I growled oaths under my breath at the fools who slapped shoulders. I felt the world turning over in agony beneath me; muttering came over its sides and filled my ears; I had an intolerable sense of things hanging. Dusk came on; the shore lights pricked out; the air continued unnaturally warm. The stars appeared, and those low down on the sky-line were red.

I yelled: "Stand by that main-sheet!"

I rushed the nearer men along on my shoulders, took the wheel from the helmsman, whirled it a-port. The main boom swung with gathering speed over my head and fetched up with the crash of a broken throat and a rain of splinters, and the *Arbitrator* stood back for the twinkling of Race Point.

And now I had to deal with twenty-six men—twenty-six men who were certain their captain had gone out of his head with the stroke of some obscure malady. They were so dazed at first that they could only stand and stare at the vanishing *Mary Sedgwick*. Then Dedos came waddling to the wheel and peered into my face with a troubled look in his own.

"You don' look good, Zhoe—" The craft in his voice would have been ludicrous at any other time. "W'y don' you go beelow an' turn een—eh, Zhoe? I tek w'eel for you." He tried to loosen my hands with a gentle insistence.

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"Get out of here," I growled at him. "I know what I'm doing."

They came at me from behind his back, so that I had no warning of the assault before it was fairly upon me—ten or fifteen of the men rushing in a compact knot, tumbling Dedos end over end to squeal in the scuppers, and falling upon me with a smothering, battering, yelling weight.

It was all over in the drawing of a breath. I have never been able to understand exactly what happened. I have no recollection of taking my hands from the wheel, but there was Denny White lying across the after companion, groaning and bleeding from the mouth. On either side of the deck-house my late assailants crouched and glowered at me. I do not believe that they knew what had happened any more clearly than I. Had one of them started I think the whole pack would have been down upon me again, but none would take the lead. It must be remembered that I had stood on the deck of the *Fortune* and pitched a whole crew over the sides with my two hands—that tradition stood behind me.

The man to lead them was not there. He had stayed out of it, forward in the bow. They needed my brother. I saw him coming now, threading his way nicely among the tubs. He jumped up on the deck-house and approached between the two parties, sat down on the edge before me, and spoke in his easy way.

"No use talkin', Joe; we got to get back, eh?"

I could not think what he was driving at.

"Don't matter about fish, 'r the *Mary*, 'r nothin'

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—eh, Joe? Ta-ta-tara-lara—to-night's *Mene Jesus*—gotta get back. What you jumpin' for, Joe?"

It is true I had started. *Mene Jesus!* I had forgotten. This was Christmas Eve, and the altars would be lighted up and down the hill streets.

"Get forward, Man'el," I managed to say. He smoothed his face with his hands and mused, looking shoreward.

"Oh yes, we'll be there, all right, with silk hats on. Boys will be boys; eh, brother?"

It had grown so dark that I could make out only the gray oval of his face. That gray oval leered at me. It was devilish. Man'el was amused. Here was a stroke of fortune fallen for Man'el. He would not have had me turn again and follow the *Mary* for worlds.

We came about the Point and let our anchor go in the hushed and oppressive night. Even then Man'el clung to me. In the dory he crowded a place for himself on the thwart facing me, with his face no more than a foot from mine, a livid oval on the blackness of the night.

"Damn fool—poor damn fool!" he murmured. "Fish can go to the devil—must see woman. Poor damn fool; don't know what he's up against, an' so she'll have to tell him. Ah—ah— my poor broken heart. We'll go an' see her—me an' you. An' such a fine night; it's hell they ain't any moon, ain't it?"

He would have made a superb gambler, Man'el. He was keen enough to know that I would never touch him; he had a devilish instinct for playing his cards. I cringed and quivered under his moving

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knife. I tried not to look at him, staring over his head at the shore lights. I was oppressed by the hopeless reflection that he was but beginning the torture. He had a weapon now to last him months and years—a balm to sooth the hurt I had done him by coming back a hero. I passed a wrist over my face and found it running with sweat. The night was hot—an August night for a Christmas Eve.

XIV

THE FESTIVAL OF MENE JESUS

WHEN we came to the beach I tramped off up-shore alone, for the reason that no one moved to go with me. Dedos, bewildered and disgruntled, crunched off heavily in another direction. Man'el went with him, but halted at the street and waited for me. I wheeled at sight of his silhouette and made to the westward. It was a quarter of an hour before I came into Shank Painter by a detour and found the house black and bolted. A fearful hush lay over the street, and above the hush the stars burned smokily. There was a rumor of music in the heavy air, creeping from the eastward. I tried my own door once more. I battered at it. I had an impulse to break it down.

"Something is going to happen," I heard myself muttering. "I've got to find Agnes. She might have left the key here—" A wave of bitterness at Agnes's carelessness came over me, still more bitter when I reflected that she would hardly expect us at this time.

"I've got to find her," I grumbled again, then turned into the lane and walked rapidly toward the front street.

"How could you be so long?"

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It was Man'el who started out of the shadow at the corner, where he had been waiting for me. He grasped my elbow. I shook him off and started to the eastward with the board walk thundering under me.

We came out of the dark into the light. There was a house with all its windows glowing. *Mene Jesus* was there. The front room was packed; we could see the figures of men and women moving across the light from a score of candles burning over the altar. Diagonally across the street another house was celebrating the festival. Four men with *violaos* played in the open doorway and chanted the monotonous drone of the *sepulchoro*. I saw the altar through the square panes, a pyramid of little steps covered with white cloth, adorned with sprouting wheat in saucers, figures of the Infant, of the Virgin, bizarre dolls, grotesque trinkets, generations old, brought over from the Islands, where they had figured at *Mene Jesus* time out of mind. Men drank wine, wiped their mouths with their sleeves, and came away, giving place to others.

Agnes was not there. I peered about the corners like a culprit escaped from prison. Man'el, always close at my side, had none of my furtiveness.

"Seen Dedos's woman?" he asked of a bystander. The man shook a thumb down-street.

We passed the mouth of the Glen and saw three houses blazing with the festival, all near together toward the back street. I hesitated here, but Man'el was asking his way of another loiterer.

"See 'em down to th' Dago's ten minutes back," the man offered. "Ain't it hot, though?"

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But we were off again without further words, I staring ahead and swinging my arms and legs furiously, Man'el clinging in my shadow—a strange pair of brothers. We turned suddenly into a sort of wharf-lane between two houses on the shore side of the street. If you go there now you will find this opening closed up by a meat market, but at that time, with the light from two house-sides pouring into it, the hollow gave the impression of a small illuminated vestibule to the huge black chamber of the harbor, whose carpet at high water lapped well up into the light.

Half a dozen people were standing in the runway now, watching through the windows the moving crowd within the westward house, listening to the thrumming music of strings, and admiring the sumptuousness of the altar, for Gabriel Danzio was showing the finest *Mene Jesus* in Old Harbor that year. This was a strange thing too, for Danzio was no Islander, but an Italian who had come ashore on the *Race* years before in the brig of which he was second in command. He had taken the custom from his wife, however, a Portuguese girl, now dead ten years. He stood on the porch as I turned into the lane and passed the time of evening with me in an unctuous voice which tried to be jocular. Danzio had grown very sleek and fat and soft-footed of late years. I did not answer his hail; I was looking at Allie Snow.

She was dressed in summer white, with the gray cape she had worn the night her father was taken thrown over her shoulders. The hood had fallen down her back, and her hair, braided round and

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round her head, was like a mesh of golden links in the light from the window.

I had come upon her suddenly. I had not expected to see her. She continued to look through the window, so that I saw her, for the first time since we were grown up, quite easy and natural. There she stood, Allison Snow, interested, standing on tiptoe, a smile on her lips, the townspeople about her. One inside dropped a glass. The whole instant of loosing hold, clutching wildly, suspense, falling, destruction, was echoed in her lovely, eager face, full in the window light. It did some queer thing inside of me. I was taken by a mad desire to rush forward and take her shoulders and bring her to face me and demand that she think of me—of me, not of a falling glass. I had a sudden, unreasoning, ungovernable sense of ownership. All the rest of the people in the lane dropped out of sight, and the girl stood there alone, mine. I suppose it was in the nature of a hallucination brought on by a night and day of mental sickness. There was a quality of culmination about it that solved at a stroke my inexplicable sense of things imminent.

"Allie," I called.

And now I saw another flash of drama play itself out in her face, with its separate acts of bewilderment, realization, happiness. Yes, be as constrained and ill at ease as ever she might be again, she could never make me forget that she had been glad to hear my voice. She was looking at me with her lips parted and her cheeks afire and a light in her eyes that I had never seen in the world before. Perhaps it was the queer night, the shadow of a shadow

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hanging in the air, the foreboding of the end of the world—who may know? For one poignant second we two stood there with naked spirits and greeted each other without words. It seemed to me an awful thing to let that moment go, totter like the glass the man had broken, fall down the past, and lie unmarked with all the broken seconds of eternity.

But it had to fall. I moved forward among the people. Allie said, "I didn't know you were back," and pointed for me to look in at the window where old Gabe Young was telling a story to a ring of listeners with grotesque contortions and graphic gestures. He was rather far gone with the good cheer of *Mene Jesus*. How was this night different from other nights? Folks passed back and forth in the street; those about us gossiped and hummed and giggled. There was no reason to believe that every eye within range was fixed on me. Nevertheless, I felt awkward and red, and mumbled nothing but "yes" and "no" to the happy questionings of the girl at my side.

I had forgotten Man'el altogether. He had not forgotten me. I became aware of his presence on the other side of Allie. He was looking through the window with us, answering Allie's queries with all that ready grace of his.

"You did get back very soon, didn't you?"

Man'el had been waiting for that question. He did not reply, now that it was put, but grinned at me instead.

"I supposed you'd gone for a week at least," she went on, not fathoming his pantomime. He continued to grin and nod his head at me, forcing the

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answer to my side. A little pucker of wonder came between the girl's eyes, and she turned to stare at my red and perspiring face.

"Why, wha—what's the matter? What's wrong, Joe?"

"This is *Mene Jesus*," I said. "Dedos has come back to celebrate with you and Agnes."

Man'el had driven me to it. And yet he did not believe I would do it. Discomfiture showed on his face as I blundered on, and the realization that I had flanked him went to my head like a dram of whisky.

"*Mene Jesus*." I spoke low but full at her. "And I came back to be with you, Allie Snow. What other reason in the world would bring me? I wanted to see you; I had to see your face—you said you would be at *Mene Jesus*. There."

I broke off, appalled by the lengths to which my rush had carried me. I seemed physically exhausted, as might a man who had lived half a year in ten seconds. I had a vision of Man'el watching the girl's face expectantly. I turned my head away. I could not face her. Men and women stared at us, children pointed, girls giggled; a dozen festival-goers had packed into the mouth of the runway. My eyes sought desperately for a rag of shadow to cover me. It seemed that I must forever parade my emotions before the populace. But there was no shadow in the passage except the shadow of the watery carpet—perfectly quiet water that scarcely trembled on the sand of the beach. I wiped my brow with my wrist; the sweat upon it crackled, it was frozen. The air had chilled without a movement, frost-struck where it lay.

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I looked back at Allie and found her face near me, her eyes looking straight up into mine. What was she thinking? Why was she waiting? What was this—her hands on my shoulders? We were alone again, on the top of the world. I reached up and covered her hands with my own. They did not draw away, but turned over and pressed palm against palm.

"Why, Allie," I wondered, seeing the miracle—"why, Allie—you do love me—Allie—Allie—"

"Now—" Man'el's face appeared from behind her shoulder—"now, Allie, tell him about—oh, you know—"

She did not seem to hear him, but looked steadily at me, her face shining with a gladness for which there is no word, her lips parted, her warm breath coming to me—the woman giving. I struck at my brother's face with the flat of my hand, but he was too quick, dodged back, protruded it from the other side and sneered:

"Poor fool; poor damn fool. Tell him, Allie—tell him what he's up against."

He stepped back and laughed, raising his face to the sky, holding out his hands, laughed and laughed. Children, without knowing why they did it, giggled and shouted in chorus. I put Allie aside and went at him, blinded with his stinging, reaching to grasp him with spread hands. And while I was covering a dozen feet in my rush the world groaned and went to pieces. The passage shrieked with a breath of ice, waste-paper and dust mingled in a reeling dance across the barred light. Man'el had vanished. I found my feet sopping in wet sand

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where the water should have been. The tide had vanished, too. I brought up and stared at the blank of the harbor.

"Where has the water gone?" I mumbled, foolishly.

The bottom had fallen out of the sea and all the fluid run away. And now it returned from the sky in a sheet of screaming rain that froze as it fell. I whirled and blundered back toward the street, shouting as I ran. The walls appeared to rock on either side of me, and the place weltered under the crystal volleys of the rain. I was blind in the midst of light. My foot struck a whimpering bundle. It was a child. I picked her up and stumbled on, carrying a dozen other whimperers forward with my shoulders. I could hear something booming behind me now.

"Water's coming back," I bellowed at the human tangle in front of me. The sound of its advance rumbled across the ridge of Old Harbor like the crash of planets. I beat them into the open street, under the flare of a corner lamp. I pawed them over indiscriminately, furiously, tumbling children and men and women about like dolls. Allie was not there.

"Get up the hill," I shouted in a man's ear, threw him back among the rest, and bolted into the howling passage of crystals once more.

Tumult crushed the world. The ocean spoke aloud, as it speaks once in a man's lifetime. I could see it coming now, a blacker wall advancing to devour the wharves. I groped my way; boards came from the walls under my hands.

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I found her flattened against a sunken door, crying my name soundlessly against the solid clamor of the gale. Her arms were about my shoulders. I tore them loose and put them back about my chest, under my armpits, and spread out my hands against the evil tongue that shot at us out of the harbor.

It seemed to me an hour that I fought in that passage. It was dark; the lighted houses had gone black. Water, water, water was all I knew—water and wreckage that battered against my back. Above the voice of the gale other voices obtruded their staccato cries: the crash of rotten wharves, the screaming of vessels in agony on the beach—wails that meant nothing unless they might be the echoes of men perishing at sea.

. . . I was on the porch of Andy Lewis's house, diagonally across from Danzio's, clinging to a pillar. One moment the front street was a foaming river tormented by wreckage; the next it was muddy ground, with flotsam stranded among tiny glistening pools. The wave had gone back. The world still rumbled with the gale, as it was to rumble all the length of that night. For this was one of those gales which come to the dignity of a name. A steamer filled with people foundered in the bay at midnight. The storm was called after that steamer—the *Carolina* gale. But the toll of its anger was heavier among the humbler people of the sea, and fifty-seven sailing-craft broke off the shores that night. Five men never came back to Old Harbor from the Plymouth beach where the *Mary Sedgwick* split on a rock fifty yards inshore.

From the porch I could see a strange thing.

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"Look, Allie, dearest — look." I pointed across the street to where a gaunt spar protruded from between the dwellings on the shore side. It was a bizarre thing to be there, illuminated by the one street-light that had lived through.

"Look, Allie—a schooner come ashore, clear up between the houses. Look at the bowsprit."

"I don't want to look," she said. Her head was down, her voice muffled; I could feel her lips on my neck. "To-night," she said—"to-night—I don't want to look at anything or any one but you."

A dripping, torn figure splashed along the barren street, laughing. It was Man'el. I did not hear him.

XV

A WARM DAY AND A COLD NIGHT

SPRING was blowing high in the back country; a gale of life swept through the fibers of the land; the woods rocked with the birth of flowers. Even my sluggish spirit bubbled and worked with the wine of the air; and Allie, forever a taut chord to be twanged by the lightest finger, was taken with a sort of spring madness that made her run and tinkle her fingers along the hanging feathers of the leaves and fall on her knees to press her face against the springing carpet.

"Joe—I love you so very much."

What could I say? What answer was there in the world to give to Allie Snow, looking up at me with her face covered with jewels it had robbed from the damp greenery? All I could do was to bend over, put my arms about her slim, strong waist, swing her high, and then kiss her wet lips. Such is the questionable penalty of being dumb.

We came to the point where Aunt Sukie's Road goes to the westward and branches off toward Atkins-Mayo. Allie danced along furiously, dragging at my thumb. It came to my mind that she had propelled me thus when we ran down Pink Hill together, after the spectacle of the chickens'

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heads. Tim scurried ahead, clearing monsters from the thickets. I brought up the rear as the heavy infantry; Hessian, I should say (the name is heavy, somehow), but more intensely happy than ever a Hessian has been.

The world was a principality of singing things that day, and I was the prince, the ineffably fortunate, the heir apparent of the sumptuous chambers of the sky. Allie Snow was so lovely, so straight and slender and strong, so radiant with the gale of living, possessed of a boisterous tenderness, preposterously careful not to crush a live thing with her dancing soles, and when she did, mourning so cataclysmically over its death. She was mine—the woman brought up to me by the heaving wreck of the centuries. At any moment I chose I might withdraw my outstretched hand, bringing her to me; might lay her head in the hollow of my arm, smother my face in her sweet hair, kiss her eyes, her cheeks, her lips. I, Joseph Manta, might do all this. I put it off from moment to moment, hoarding up my gold, till the treasure-chests burst and I must kiss my love.

And after that we climbed a thick-set path—the disembodied clamor of a dog, the head of a girl, the head and shoulders and chest of a man—till the cover opened out and we stood near the Province Land boundary-stone, looking down into the hollow—that hollow so memorable to me.

“Do you remember that day, Joe?”

“Yes—I remember.”

“I was afraid of you that day, Joe. Oh, I was afraid. I meant to come to you all the time, but

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I was so frightened when I got here. You'll never make me afraid of you again, will you, Joe?"

"No—no, Allie," I cried. I am afraid I was rather a baby over her then. I assured myself fiercely that I would cut off my right hand before I would make her afraid of me again. I wonder what our emotions would have been had we known what that protestation of mine would come to mean.

We went down and stood in the hollow. Once it had been the temple of the fire-god, once the sanctuary of silence; now it was the altar of the god of another fire. Worshipers crowded at the altar; they stood by their millions in all the open spaces; the oaks and pines and maples chanted the service, the humblest bluet heard the call to prayer. The world made itself over. The warm air stung like a rain of needles. Allie was looking at me with large eyes. She was a woman; I a man.

"Come," I said, "let's go home." The strangest feeling of ecstatic terror had hold of me.

Allie no longer danced as we went away toward Paul Dyer's; she had come beyond dancing into those remoter and more shadowy regions of happiness from which one may not send back word so easily. I remembered how I had seen Dedos and the Handkerchief Lady's daughter walking across the sand, far apart and unmindful of one another, and here were we doing the same thing, walking with a sort of stiff formality, one on either side of the sandy road. A certain combination of words was running through my brain—two short words. It is curious that the simple thought of a certain set

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of air-vibrations can throw a man into such a fever, but there I was, tramping along solemnly and thinking about those two words. At the crest of the First Ridge I spoke them aloud:

"My—wife—"

The loveliness and sweetness of Allie Snow was always a fresh discovery to me. At the look of her now I realized for the thousandth time that Fortune was a blind god to pick out a dumb, heavy mortal for this creature of light.

"When shall we be married, Joe?"

"Next month—"

The step was taken. I had all the sensations of a man coming suddenly into a strange, broad avenue in his own little town. I looked at Allie, wondering if she, too, had felt the momentous change.

"Allie—sweetheart—what is the matter?"

She seemed to shiver; her hands were plucking at one another; her eyes narrowed as if in pain. It had all come about so abruptly that my mind went blank. "What—what is it?" I implored. Her voice had the same quality of horror in it when she ran to me and clutched my arm and cried:

"Will you marry me to-night, Joe—this afternoon?"

"Why, Allie—" The idea was thrust at me too suddenly for me to grasp it. I heard myself mumbling words that meant nothing, while I struggled numbly to bring order into my brain. There were impossibilities, other impossibilities came and piled upon them. "What would people say?" I heard myself expostulating. "We couldn't get ready.

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It upsets everything. You know Old Harbor—how it whispers—”

It was utterly beyond me to understand the girl. Why did she cling to me so desperately and watch my face as though her life or death lay in it?

“Never mind,” she said, of a sudden. I felt her hands slipping from my arms. “It isn’t anything. I’m just silly.”

We walked on soberly, I with a sense of relief. I examined her face furtively. It was still rigid, but I could make out no show of what went on behind it.

“Allie,” I appealed again, “what is the matter?”

“Nothing.”

As we came out of the Cold Storage fields a flower of smoke caught my eye. For the first time that season the porgie fleet moved in around Long Point, smothering the light buildings with its dingy breathings.

When I left Allie at the porch of the apple-green house she was trembling again. She did not look at me. I could not understand what she said, but I felt that she wanted me to go quickly. There was a wall of something. I beat my hands against its impalpable substance. I was bruised and bewildered.

“She’s sick,” I said to myself as I went away.

I got up from my supper that night, folded my napkin with painful accuracy, walked to the window, stared out aimlessly, and muttered, “She’s sick.”

I went into my room and sat on my bed. “She’s sick,” I told myself.

I clung to that assertion as a starving man will

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cling to a crust. The dark came into Shank Painter, ran along its floor, obtruded its presence from doorways and yards. I wanted light. I struck a match, lit a candle, and sat very close to it in my cheerless room and muttered again: "Allie is sick."

I can laugh now at some of the bizarre things in my life, but I can never smile at the memory of my clinging to that hope that Allie might be sick.

There were men in the street outside. One knocked at my door. I went out to find Sam Stull, captain of the *Unicorn*, panting and gesturing.

"They're raisin' hell down-street," he wheezed. "Who?"

"Steamer-men—Black Caps. Come on down, Manta."

"What for?" It was nothing to me if they tore the town apart that evening. I wanted to get back to my candle and my formula of hope.

"See these here men?" He swung an arm at the dark knot behind him. "They's four crews waitin' down by the Glen, an' they'll run in an' beat hell out o' them bastards if you'll take 'em."

Here was balm for a sore spirit—a Yankee captain running to the door of Tony Manta's boy to tell him such a thing as this. My words became things of weight, to be handled with careful dignity.

"They're all right—those steamer-men," I pronounced. "I know some of them. They're just like you or me—no better, no worse."

The man stared and opened his mouth. The crowd behind him stirred with amazement; one of them simpered: "Oh—*hell!*" I was filled with

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a rage at the fools. Who was it that drove the men off the doomed *Fortune*? Who was it that brought the *Arbitrator* into shelter the night the *Mary Sedgwick* went on the Plymouth shore?

"Those fellows won't hurt you," I reiterated, conscious of my patience with these agitators. Then I closed the door upon them and retired to the wan comfort of my candle. I heard the rustling of their voices and feet outside, and then the discreet movement of a heavy body through the adjoining room, followed by the opening and closing of a door. So Dedos was one of the lightheads too.

I was sore and tired and black of spirit. It seemed to me a preposterous thing that grown men could not slough off this childish lust for banging fists and breaking heads, but instead must come pattering through the night to disturb a man at his brooding. The steamer-men had always come ashore in Old Harbor. They acted as normal men would act: they would fight a little, perhaps, break a few windows and fences; it was not so desperate a thing, after all.

"Allie is sick." I found myself back at it again. But I had grown too nervous for my room to hold me. I put on my hat and went out into the dark street. If she were sick there would be a light in her room. There could be no harm in taking a turn to the street of the three angles. At any rate, I had to be on the move somewhere.

The house was dark when I came to it, save for a light in the hall which always burned. I heard the creak of rockers from the front porch, and that was a reassuring sound, for something out of the

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ordinary must be afoot to have Mr. Snow up at this time. He had not gone about much of evenings since the "mistake." I called to him in a low voice.

"Is Allie all right, Mr. Snow?"

I heard the rocker groan as Mr. Snow got up, and then the sound of his feet on the walk. He had aged very rapidly of late: it was the shuffle of an old man that came toward me. But when he stood on the other side of the gate, peering up at me, I was conscious of the old aura of power come back upon him for the moment, by what miracle I could not say. His face that had grown so pale was flushed a little now.

"Is that you, Manta?" he piped. "Well—go on your ways. I'm tired o' you ginnies hangin' 'round here."

And three days before he had fawned on me so that it gave me a feeling of sickness. I ignored him now as one would an insane man. I had waited for those words many months, and now that they were uttered I thought him crazy.

"Is Allie all right?" I repeated, patiently, shoving the gate open a crack with my foot. "I must see Allie, do you understand?"

Then he was insane. He threw his fragile weight against the gate and struck at my arms with his clawed hands and chattered nonsense.

"You ——— ginny, you—you ———. I'll fix you— *Help!*"

"*Father! Joel!*"

Allie was only a shadow of gray in the darkness by the porch.

"Allie," I called to her, "are you—"

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"Joe," she broke out, but with an appealing desperation that made me shudder, "please don't come in. I ask you please, Joe, not to come in. Good night."

"Good night." I turned and walked away in a sort of daze, muttering again, "Allie's sick," and behind me the old man crouched down ecstatically, with his head poked over the gate, and jeered after me: "*See—see—you ——— ginny.*" A boy of ten would do it so.

That was not all I heard. There was Allie's voice mingling with her father's, low and tense.

"Father, father, won't you please come in and go to bed? I'll manage it this once. Please—for my sake—please."

I did not know where I went, and I did not care. The front street was checkered with knots of men when I came into it. I went straight along, and these knots moved out of my way. I could hear them whispering about me after I had passed. There was a fight of some sort going on behind Swift's store; oaths and sounds of shuffling on boards and a groan came out into the street. Windows crashed about the invisible brawling-field. I heard one man shouting for another to come, and recognized Harry Bomar's voice. But this was no matter for wonder. The Bomar boys, three of them, had always been the hottest against the steamer-men. I kicked an empty flask and almost fell, near the post-office street. The Black Caps were drinking.

It was a strange night. I had a feeling of stalking through a lighted ball-room, with a battle-field rum-

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bling under the windows. No one fought, but there was fighting all around. I saw a crowd up the Glen, standing in front of the Ide girls' house. They were lean girls—the Ide girls. In the years since I have been away from Old Harbor I have been able to speculate more philosophically upon my memories. I have often thought that the Ide girls may have gotten more real joy out of life than some of the neighbors who threw stones. The town gave them a bad name; they accepted it and shook it gaily in the town's face, wringing a sort of tawdry romance out of the adventurous isolation.

But where was I going? Oh yes, I knew now. I had to stop thinking about that scene at the gate of the apple-green house, and so I was going to find Jock Crimson. There was too much fighting and breaking of things going on—Crimson and I could talk it over as one man of importance to another.

As I passed Gabriel Danzio's fruit store I saw a crowd of steamer-men plundering the shelves inside and heard the fat proprietor in ponderous flight up an invisible alley, with bottles and fruit raining on the walls about him. His son, Jamie, a slim youth with the looks of his mother, as I remember her, fraternized with the marauders and laughed at the diminishing clamor of his flight. I did not pause here. I went on to the open square at the head of Long Wharf.

The place was almost filled with the shiny black caps of the steamer-men, so that I stared across a heaving carpet of them. The squares of light from the shop windows, broken into smaller squares by

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the many little panes, gave the gathering a kaleidoscopic effect of shattered illumination.

"Crimson here?" I shouted over the heads.

It was evident that the question had not been expected. No one answered. Far back in the crowd a man laughed. Then all of them began to grin, and I saw some whispering to their neighbors behind their hands. I was growing impatient.

"Where's Crimson?" I bawled, and this time I singled out one to give me my answer—a young fellow in a purple shirt directly ahead of me—pointing at him with a crooked finger. He blushed as prettily as a girl, turned abashed eyes to one and another of his companions, and when he saw my finger still demanding of him, he waved a hand up-street and ducked into the throng while the older men jeered at him. It was one of these who cried to me:

"Want to fight 'im, Manta?"

"No," I gave him back, turned, and lumbered away to the westward, vaguely conscious of men I knew staring and scowling at me from the mouths of dark lanes, and of Dedos, waddling forth to get in my way. I pushed him off roughly. Something in the direction of that young fellow's fluttering gesture, accidental perhaps, had opened my mind to a black possibility. And in that dark instant half-forgotten, puzzling words and actions and insinuations rushed together and became clarified.

I stood at the gate of the apple-green house, breathing from my headlong progress up the front street and staring painfully into the shadows. The front door opened, breaking an oblong of light into the building's black hulk.

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So I had found Jock Crimson.

He stood there in the illuminated oblong, half filling it with his flat black silhouette, and by his side was a lesser silhouette which was Allie Snow. He had his arm about her, pressing her close. Beyond, where the full light fell over his skinny figure, Allie's father watched them and rubbed his hands together, for all the world like a clothing merchant consummating a profitable deal.

This is the thing I saw there. For a moment I could not think. The channels of my brain were clogged with a phlegm. I must have been standing where the light from the door would pick me out, for Crimson's eyes came to me. He lifted his free hand, clutched at the air as though to tear the night apart in the exuberance of his vitality, and bellowed at me joyously: "Ay, cap'n! How arre yoo?"

"How are you, cap'n?" I shouted back, dully.

Then I turned my face toward the front street and stumbled away, quite blind. Some one was beside me, running along at my pace. Finally I knew that it was my brother, Man'el. He was pale too—as pale as I must have been. But he was Man'el. He could grin at me and mock me and cry in my ear, jerkily with the running:

"You've—had a—long—sleep—eh, Joe?"

I struck him on the shoulder, sending him away in the darkness, and ran on. I was far up toward the salt-marshes before I had any realization of what I was doing, and then I found myself stumbling along and muttering to myself over and over and over:

"I ask you please not to come in." "Father,

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father, won't you please come in and go to bed? I'll manage it this once. Please—for my sake—please."

That was a cold night. I did not go back to Shank Painter, but wandered about the country to the westward, shivering and trying not to think. Strangely enough, I cannot recollect where I went that cold night. I have only a dim memory of paths leading here and there, all alike and all horrible, dark, and hopeless. Some train of habit was at work within my brain, however, and three o'clock in the morning found me, damp and haggard, standing on the beach among my men, who grunted over the dories. Then I remembered we were to sail at three—I had set the time myself.

No one spoke to me. They chattered in whispers among themselves, feverishly, perhaps because they did not want to speak to me. We had two dories ashore. Dedos kept away from me all the time we were launching, and I saw him manoeuvre carefully so that he should go in the other boat.

The men kept up their low chatter as they rowed out toward the vessel. Now and then I caught fragments of their talk. I heard the names of the Bomar boys: "He'll never walk again, Miah won't." "Wonder what their man will say now. One co'pse an' two cr'pples. God damn 'em—I'd like to—"

I cannot say that I was astonished or shaken by the grim burden of those rags of talk. It was not news: it seemed that I had known it all from birth. It chimed in too precisely with the horrible orchestration of that night to prick my interest. One of

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the Bomar boys killed, the others broken. Yes; but Allie Snow was dead of her sickness.

I stood on the after-deck and directed the business of getting the vessel under way. We moved out of the anchorage, filled, came about on the port tack to the east, and slid silently along parallel to the water-front. A cluster of lights at the end of Long Wharf marked the transient city of the steamers. The breath of their soft coal drifted out across us; lights moved here and there along the streets made up of decks, side by side. They were getting ready to move out themselves upon the business of the day.

Man'el came aft and sat on the deck-house.

"So you never knowed," he said. "Never, all this time it's been goin' on, you never knowed. You poor fool, Joe."

I continued to stare at the lights in a hopeless, dull way. Man'el went on.

"D'you know what Crimson said up to the square last night—afterward? Huh? Right out before all his men? He says he'll take that girl away with him—home—next time the fleet comes to this port. Can you swallow that—eh, Joe?"

I could not swallow anything, for there was something tight about my throat.

XVI

AGNES CARRIES IN HER OWN WOOD

THERE used to be a certain shelf in Miah Swift's store, when I was a boy, that furnished me with a subject for unfailing wonderment. This shelf, perhaps four or five feet in length, exhibited a file of bottles of every color and every shape known to human perception. Now each of these bottles contained an infallible remedy for some particular human ill. The characteristic which knit the whole company into a common relationship was the fact that all the labels were white, and, further, that, besides its own particular ailment, each compound was beneficial, at a pinch, for all the other disorders to which man is heir. It was only after a prolonged mental struggle that I could understand this phenomenon. However, enlightenment was given me and the eternal verities put in countenance when I learned at Old Harbor school that the sum of all colors is white. Each separate disease had its own color, then, but the ultimate total of bodily distress was white.

Since I have grown up I have discovered that there is only one panacea—the accretion of seconds and minutes and days. Habit is the physician that will pull a man through. Most wounds will heal

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if only the sufferer will eat his meals, go to bed at night, get up in the morning, earn his living, and go for walks. He may be numb all over, but he is mending. One day he will wake up to find himself in health.

It was on an evening in late August that I woke up. We were at supper, but the low sun still made a brilliant checkerwork on the front-room carpet, to be seen through an open door from the dining-room. The children were laughing merrily over something one of them had said.

"Aren't they happy to be alive?" I found myself thinking. "They have everything before them, and they're happy."

Why should they not be happy? Agnes had planted some climbing roses at the back of the house the spring after she came to Shank Painter. Now they covered the windows, and the air, filtering through the mesh of blossoms, filled the room with their fragrant exhalations. A company of little birds tumbled out of the air, made a riot in the garden for a moment, and then tumbled off over the neighboring yards.

"Is the *linguisa* good to-night, Joe?"

I found Agnes looking at me with her queer, bright smile, questioning. And then I discovered that the *linguisa* was good. I told her so, passed my plate for another supply, and ate a great deal of it. I could not get away from that happy look of Agnes's. Wherever I turned my eyes they came upon it reflected in sounds, odors, faces, inanimate things. I discovered myself laughing in a tentative sort of way at a heavy joke of Dedos's. He got up

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and went to the cupboard for a spoon. Now I made a fresh discovery. Dedos walked like the elephant that came to Old Harbor when I was twelve.

On the heels of this came the memory of what I had said to my mother under the great brown tent. "He walks lek Uncle Dedos, ma."

It is curious how one little memory will bring a thousand others in its train. While I sat there and lifted a fork from the plate to my mouth a whole company of years rushed out of the grave where I had buried them and stood beside me, glowing with the familiar colors of life. Dedos had settled down in his chair once more, and I caught him in the act of winking at his wife. It was apparent that he labored under a necessity for speech.

"I see Lem Dow t'day," he observed, with painful nonchalance.

"Is that so?" Agnes followed him. "What did he have to offer?" I decided later that this had been rehearsed.

"Po'gees goeen' sout'. Don' 'spect fleet back thees way no more thees year, he say."

They took me in so completely that I found it necessary to appear uninterested.

"She was sick," I suddenly pronounced to myself. The laughter and roses and chatter of birds and checkers of sunshine had done their work. It was not till I marked the astonishment on the others' faces that I realized I had spoken aloud. My knife and fork went clattering in my plate to cover my confusion, I pushed back my chair, started to go to my room, and then, instead, turned

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toward Agnes's chair. Just at that moment she held in herself all the warmth and kindness and affection of a world that was beginning. I leaned over with an impulse that was beyond me, put my arms about her shoulders and kissed her hair.

"There!" I challenged, confronting Dedos with a face of defiance. The huge fellow rumbled with heavings of delight.

"Look out for me, Zhoe Manta." He popped a terrible fusillade of fingers at me.

Agnes turned and looked up, pink with happiness.

"Why don't you go out in the garden, Joe? It's such a fine evening."

Was that a nod that passed between the two?

"Perhaps I will after a while. I've got some work to do now—accounts."

I went into my room and set myself to a task that was always the hardest portion of my stewardship. I could never see why old man Nickerson should need figures on paper to prove that I had taken such or such a weight of fish. If I gave him the money, there was the thing settled and done for without bother to either. I always fumed and sweat over the business. But to-night, somehow, I could not fume or sweat or take it seriously. After sitting there at my table half an hour there was not so much as a pen-scratch on the paper in front of me.

"She was sick." This was the only result at which my figuring arrived.

I heard Agnes moving about in the adjoining room; I thought I heard a muffled snort from Dedos, then the creak of hinges opening and closing cautiously, and Agnes's fingers tapping at my door.

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"Joe," she complained, "my man's gone out, and the children—I wonder if you'd get me a little wood from the shed."

Now this was preposterous. I had heard her "man" sneaking out the second before. And even with him out of the question, Agnes had never asked any one to bring in wood for her. She was a fisherman's wife.

Of course I went, quickly enough, but I wondered. And then, when I had opened the door, my wonder was that I had sat in my close room when the night was out of doors. The smell of lush growth came up from the earth, stars struggled into their places in the quiet dome overhead, a million millions of leaves waved a whisper along the Cape, frogs were droning somewhere far away, and nearer at hand the placid water lapped along the beaches.

I had a sudden thought of going down to the street of the three angles, but I put it away as suddenly. No, I could not do that. Let me live a little longer. Then perhaps—one day.

I crunched along the sandy path between the shells with which Agnes had bordered it (perhaps with some memory of the motley house in the dunes) toward the dim loom of the shed in the rear. My eyes happened upon a strange shadow by the fence, and for an instant I gasped and gulped with the queer start it gave me.

"Steady, Joe," I cautioned. "Don't begin seeing things now." A bush I had never noticed, probably—but it had made me think of her, standing there in the dusk. I fumbled for the latch of the door.

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"Pa-Jim."

Oh, I shall remember till the end of my memory the breathless quality of that low cry in the night—the sob of fright that was behind it but did not make it falter—the valor of the act.

I found myself shivering and grabbing at the latch as though there were no other end in man's life but the opening of a wood-shed door.

"Joe! Oh, Joe! Joe!"

And then I came into the lane—how, I cannot say. I only know that my arms were about Allie Snow, and that the stars had established themselves in the sky. I tried to look at her face, but it was buried in the folds of my coat, and her voice struggled up to me.

"Joe, I was sick when you saw me there. Oh, if I could only tell you why! I will, some day. I was sick—"

"I know, sweetheart."

Why, of course I knew. Had I not known it from the beginning—had I not said it when she stood so white and rigid on her porch? And there I was, blubbering like a child of three and patting her hair and mumbling for her not to cry, and generally making a spectacle of myself. In truth, she was not crying at all, but dry-eyed and breathing hard and a little frightened, as one who has called into a blank and beheld a world created at her hail.

We went away into the back country—that back country we both loved so well—and I am afraid that Agnes carried in her own wood.

Neither of us said much for a time. We were children who had not yet learned to talk and ven-

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tured upon the learning awkwardly. I have often thought there was a certain curious symbolism in that walk through the woods. We went along at a furious rate, both of us panting. We ran up hills, we rushed through thick-set paths, we floundered across cranberry-bogs, jet-black under the rays of the moon low over the sand. Each of us had the feeling that we must cover a vast amount of ground in the shortest time possible. And so we rushed through the back country.

As I have said, we went in silence, but it was enough for me to look down now and then and find my Allie's face shining up at me in the silver light and touch her fingers with my own.

We came and stood in the hollow, facing each other. She was more beautiful than I had ever seen her—perhaps because she was older. She had been through the flame, and the flame had cleaned away all but the woman of her. It may be that the scorching had done something for my eyes as well. She was all white and gray in that placid illumination, like a spiritual figure moving in one's dream.

"Come," I said; "let's go home." That is what I had said the other time. By some occult stroke those words of mine, repeated, seemed to erase something of the interval between. When we came to the ridge over the town I must efface it further by repeating, "My—wife."

"When shall we be married?" Allie asked, turning with a gasp of happiness as she understood my stratagem.

"To-night." I took both her hands.

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"No, Joe; next month will do—now."

And, failure that I was, I could not look at her dear, smiling face, but bent my head and kissed the palms of her hands.

"It *will* be next month, Allie?" I must be sure of it."

"Yes, Joe—if you want it so. And Joe—"

She hesitated so long that I began to be afraid.

"What is it?"

"Joe—I'm wondering if we couldn't go and live somewhere—away from here."

"In December," I told her, "I'm going to take the master's examinations in the city. And after that we can go wherever ships can go."

We came back to the apple-green house and sat together on the steps. The old man rocked in the shadow behind us, but the dreary rhythm of his creaking and the occasional whine of his complaining at my intrusion could not mar the happiness of the night for me. The world was so good that nothing evil could exist in it. I thought of Jock Crimson, and of how he had stood under the flare of a lantern waving his good will to a pair of vagabonds.

"I know Crimson," I said, suddenly. Allie's hand tightened a little on mine, that was all.

"I like Crimson," I went on, expanding in the kindly night. "He was very good to me once upon a time. I think he is—" But Allie broke into my speech with a hand pressing my lips and a fierce appeal in her words.

"Don't, Joe—don't talk that way. Tell me you hate him. Tell me you would kill him if you saw

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him now—this minute—here. Joe—my Joe—tell me—please.”

I pulled her hand from my mouth, turned, and stared at her. This bitter rush of hers had taken my breath away. I found her staring back at me, dumb and frightened. So we sat for a space of seconds, and then she leaned nearer and hid her face in my coat.

“It’s nothing, Joe. I’m happy to-night—just happy. Please be happy too.”

I could not understand, but I could be happy.

A man stumped past the gate, crackling the gravel at the point of a wooden leg. I knew him for Charlie Dyer, skipper of that *Mary Sedgwick* that had gone to pieces on the Plymouth shore.

“Do you remember the night of the gale, sweetheart—the night I came back?”

Her arms tightened about my neck.

“There goes Dyer. He’ll never walk so well from that night.”

Allie’s face came up, and she asked me a question.

“Why did he go on that night?”

“Just to beat us, Allie.”

“Did he know that storm was coming?”

“He must have. He had a glass.”

“And he went on anyway?”

“Yes.”

She was looking away from me now—very far away, it seemed to me.

“Dearest,” I implored, “what’s the matter?” I was beyond my depth once more.

“Nothing, Joe.” Her arms were about my shoul-

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ders again. "Just let me be glad to-night—make me be happy. I love you so very much."

It is not always pleasant to sit alone in one's room. It is bearable, however, when one can make out low voices in a neighboring room, happy laughter, rustling of cloth, and rumors of whispering, and may gather from these invisible phenomena that the wedding-dress is getting on.

And then perhaps I would venture through the doorway, having forgotten, and there was Agnes holding up horrified hands to tell me not to dare another step, for I must not see. But perhaps I did see a fleck of white through the front-room door; or, if I did not see, at least I could hear a voice I loved calling to me, "Dear—please, please don't."

If a man have a few memories such as these to keep him company, then he may see a deal of bad times and come through them.

Dedos had taken upon himself the part of wary sentinel to scan the horizon. His heavy effects of unconcern had me at the point of roaring more than once. At supper-time he would fall to bewailing the dirth of fish in the bay.

"No haddock, no po'gies, no nuttin'—"

"No po'gies?" Allie would ask in vast amazement.

"Nope. Don' beelieve dey come back no more thees year. Fleet stay in sout' all a time."

But there came an evening in late September when he could not hide his uneasiness. I saw it the moment he came into the house.

"Dey comeen' nort'," he blurted out, popping his fingers dismally.

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I did not need to ask who the "dey" might be. I did not wait for supper, but went immediately to the street of the three angles. I passed a crowd of men talking violently, one of them with his fists shaking in the air. They turned and followed me with their eyes as I went along. Another knot was gathered around Miah Bomar, who sat hunched in a wheel-chair. They too watched me. The news was about.

I found Mr. Snow on the porch, rocking, as always. Even before he spoke I marked the indefinable change that had come over him, suffusing the fragile shell of his being with an echo of the old authority. The news had come here too.

"Go away, ginny," he quavered, scowling and tapping his stick ferociously on the boards. "Go on away, ginny. Allie ain't here."

"Mr. Snow," I said, "you're lying to me. Don't do it any more." I opened the gate and went into the hallway, where I caught a glimpse of a white frock. She lifted her face to be kissed, but I would wait. I took her hand and led her into the kitchen, to be away from the porch.

"Do you know?" I asked.

"Yes."

"We'll be married to-night and go away," I said.

"No, Joe; it will be all right—now. See—" She led me to the stove and poked her fingers among the ashes of a paper.

"I had a letter—from him."

Then, seeing the look on my face, she smiled and held my hands very tightly.

"Joe, it's all right. I asked father to write him

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not to come to this house, and he did—father wrote him.”

“*Did you?*” I had wheeled and caught sight of the old man peering in at the door, where he had come noiselessly, like a withered mouse. I put the question again, advancing, with a finger of accusation pointed at him. Ah, he was cunning.

“I’ve forgotten,” he mumbled, with his eyes on the head of his stick, which he clawed. He was not afraid of me; he was only playing that he was. The evening sun, unslanting through a western window, struck on the opposite wall, from whence it streamed back and made a ghostly pallor in the hallway. Perhaps it was the effect of this outlandish illumination, or partly that, which took the old, rickety, grinning, and mumbling man out of the familiar world and made him suddenly unassailable, monstrous, and sinister. It seemed to me at that moment that there was no power on earth, physical or moral, to move this inertia of his.

“He won’t come here?” I said, weakly.

“I don’ know—don’ know. What’s an old man like me know?” His blue lids were still hanging over his eyes, but I had a feeling of the eyes somehow seeing me all the time—bright and malignant.

“But, Mr. Snow—” I protested, more than ever shaken.

“Reckon he c’n come here if he wants. I can’t stop him, c’n I? I’m an old man, ain’t I?”

I turned hopelessly to Allie and found her as shaken as I. She was pale; the corners of her lips drooped as though with fatigue. Then I saw that she was staring into the hallway, beyond her father.

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Some one was stirring there; I heard a movement of feet, myself. So did the old man.

It was Agnes. She must have been standing there for some minutes before she moved forward into the half-glow of the refracted sun. Mr. Snow half turned to face her and appeared to collapse against the wall. Then something occurred which I could not understand.

Agnes reached out and grasped his right shoulder. He shrank still more desperately close against the wall, his eyes fascinated, his face contorted with fear.

"Your man Crimson is not going to see Allie, is he?" she asked.

"No, no, no! I'll give ye an oath—I'll say anythin' ye want. I'm old—"

But she would not let him go. She pinched his shoulder so that he whimpered, bent her face close to his, and shook her fingers before his eyes as though she were dealing with a delinquent child.

"*Allie must not see Crimson. Allie must not see Crimson.*" She bored it in with repetitions. "You understand? She must not see him—because she is too tired, too worn out and weak. Do you think I don't know what has been going on in this house?"

"No—no; prob'ly ye do—yes—yes. I'm an old, feeble man—"

"When the fleet comes, *Allie will come to my house.*"

"Yes—yes—yes. Sure—come t' your house—"

Agnes released his pointed shoulder, and he collapsed in a heap on the floor of the hallway, a pitiful spectacle. But I had no time for pity, I was

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so taken up with wonder at this abrupt transfiguration of the Handkerchief Lady's girl. Wherever had she come by this smooth ferocity, this poise, this headship of affairs, this inscrutable domination over the old man, who but a moment before had himself been inscrutably dominant? I think I already began to comprehend the reason for it somewhere in the back of my brain, for when, on that later night, Dedos stood over me with his livid face and clenched hands and hard breathing, I could blurt it out quickly enough. But the idea had taken no form yet, and so I marveled to see Agnes standing there over the fallen man, calm and hard, as though she had never had an emotion in her life. Her eyes were on Allie now, holding her off from her father.

"You will come straight to me, Allie, if the fleet comes in. Promise me that you will."

But Allie, rebellious, ran to her father and petted him and tried to lift him up. "I can't leave him here all alone," she cried. "No, no, I couldn't—"

"Then you will both come." There was something flinty and relentless about Agnes that astounded me. I heard the old man's voice, muffled, chattering: "Yes, yes—we'll both come, girl—honest to God we will."

Then it was that I realized that I was standing like a graven image when things were to be done, and I ran forward and picked up the trembling wreck in the hall and set him in a chair.

And after all, this flurry and disruption had been to no purpose. The day following, Dedos resumed his cloak of nonchalance.

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“Dey start sout’ again,” he mused, scaring little Aggie nearly to death with a broadside of fingers under her nose.

There came a time when only a week stood between me and the day. One trip to the Channel, a day in the city—home. I went away on the second of October, and Allie stood on the end of a wharf watching the dories drawing away over the water. Dedos sat beside me on the thwart. I suddenly plucked at his sleeve.

“Dedos. Can’t you take the vessel this one trip—say?”

“Steady, boy.” He whacked me on the back with a jovial grunt. “I was feedgity w’en I was young lek you. She been all righ’—dey wee sout’, boy.”

“Of course she’ll be all right—what do you think—” But for all that, I could not bear to see that fleck of white that was Allie Snow growing smaller and smaller as we came out to the *Arbitrator*.

“Don’t be a fool,” I pleaded with myself.

And yet I wanted to be back on the wharf with her. It seemed to me she was calling. But of course she was not. I was glad Man’el was not there to see my fidgeting. I could not have stood his harrying. He had gone with the *Rose Dorothy*, at his own wish and mine.

The anchor came up creaking, the halliards rattled in the blocks, the canvas filled, and we moved about the Point, which came out like a yellow tongue to devour the straggling town.

XVII

A NIGHT-RUNNING

MUCH more than any landsman knows, the sea has its own streets and by-paths and places, marked by lines and boundaries as surely as those of an inland country. It is hard for one person to tell another how the man whose affairs carry him continually over them is able, even on a thick night, to read the shadowy sign-posts of these thoroughfares. Perhaps it is something akin to the sense of a blind man who may walk about his own neighborhood in security, guided by the "feel" of things underfoot.

The Race will wake me from the soundest sleep. That is the sort of sign-posts we have at sea. I have known myself, on a quiet day, with air and tide setting in the same quarter, to fetch up staring in my bunk the moment the keel beneath me entered the stream of the Race.

So it was on this seventh day of October. We put the fish out on a good market that morning in the city and cleared from the dock as the Atlantic Avenue whistles were blowing for noon. At half past two I watched Minot's Light go clear on the starboard hand, passed the word to Dedos, and went below for my first easy sleep in over a hundred hours.

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Next I was sitting bolt upright in my bunk, actually trembling a little with the shock of consciousness—and all over nothing to which I could give a name. We had come into the Race, just as I had come upward of a hundred times, always with the same inexplicable business.

I remember this particular time so vividly because the man at the wheel was saying something. I do not recall now who that man was, but his words, coming down to me through the open companion, have remained with me always in the light of a brief and significant prologue, read by one of the actors before the curtain rises on some scene of action and tumult in a theater.

The scene ushered in, as it were, by that remark of the helmsman's has come to be one of the epics of Old Harbor in these years. Only last summer, when I was back in the town, I was amazed at the spectacle of a boy of seven stalking majestically up one of the hill streets at the head of a small company, to whom he announced:

"Cap'n Jig went up th' Glen,
Ma'chin' with a hundred men—"

and other matters which surprised me immensely. Enough that in its character of epic the hero had lost his name and a short score of good fellows had multiplied with startling vigor.

What the helmsman was saying was this:

"Eet's late for 'em up dees way. I never see dat smoke round here dees time a year beefore."

I sat there on the blankets for a long time, staring at the tapestry of oil-clothes misting above

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the cabin stove. It seemed as though a weight which had been hanging over me had lowered gently, smothering and pressing me down. I knew what the man at the wheel meant.

After a while I got up and wandered about the confined space of the cabin. I rearranged a bundle of charts with painful care. I turned up the wick of the binnacle lamp, turned it down, turned it up once more and smoothed its edge with a burnt match. I dusted the glass over the picture of the Virgin. I did anything that came under my hand to fill up the minutes—to hold off the time when I must come up on deck and look at things.

But time could not be held off forever. I became aware that the deck of the cabin shifted, then a bang and a shock above-decks told me that the vessel had worn about to stand over the Point. I clambered up the companion-ladder very slowly.

Then I saw the porgie-steamers hiving about the end of Long Wharf like a swarm of evil and smudgy wasps. I stood by the wheel and counted them, still to be doing something with my mind. There were twenty-four steamers, as nearly as I could make out; that would mean in the neighborhood of half a thousand men ashore. I could picture the narrow corridor of the front street filled with their brawling, and a knot of them swaggering up the street of the three angles—it was this last that made me so bitter.

A half-sun stood over Pink Hill. The black silhouette of the ridge gnawed it away till only a fine blade of crimson hung there. When it did slip away it was as though the act of its going had fired

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some hidden train, and over the face of the harbor a vast red and silent torrent flared upward toward the zenith.

"Gawd, ain't it purty, though?"

One of the men behind me said it. That is the first and last time I can remember ever having heard a fisherman moved to words by an esthetic aspect of nature.

I suppose that it was very beautiful. To me, that tremendous column of the steamers' smoke, turned back to the parent flame by the dying of the sun, appeared an ugly and monstrous thing. It filled me with a sense of portent to watch the shadow of the earth crawling up that tower of living vapor, killing as it crawled. When we let our anchor go the dusk was already crowding down over the water, and far up in the sky the apex of the vapor still burned, like an intruding planet hovering over the earth.

It was a wonderfully quiet night. We came in at low water, and the sound of a fish-cart's axle screaming over the flats a mile down-shore came to our ears as loud and important as our own dory's bow grounding on the pebbles. The men got over the side with a volley of watery explosions; they grasped the gunwales in their strong hands, and the lightened boat ran far up over the last threads of the ripples. Then I got out and stood on the damp sand; stood there because I could think of nothing else to do. Ever since that word of the helmsman's had come down through the companion all my powers of thought and action seemed to have been clogged by some inexplicable bond.

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Dedos shouldered his ditty-bag and drew up beside me. Often and often since I have heard him going on to the crowd in the back room at Silva's about the fear he had of me that night. "I tell you he looked 's beeg's a horse," he would say. I must have looked portentous, glowering there in the half-light.

"W'at y' goeen' do?" he asked me, making a pretense of securing the strings of his bag. I looked about me and understood that all the crew were observing me covertly. They wanted to know what I was going to do; it came to me that they had been wondering over that question since the lookout first raised the Cape that afternoon, with the pall of soft coal standing up above its distant reach.

"I'm going home and eat," I answered.

Side by side we tramped across the glimmering flats and up the beach and along the front street, deserted at the supper-hour this far to the westward. At the foot of Denby's Lane Dedos looked up at me again with an expression of concern in his wide face that would have seemed comical to me in any other mood.

"W'at y' goeen' do?" he repeated his question.

"I'm going to eat supper."

He padded along beside me for a moment in awkward silence; then he stopped, as though with a sudden decision, and waited for the straggling men to come up with him. Over my shoulder I perceived them gathering about him in a compact, dark knot, from which his arm emerged, gesturing toward the center of the town. When he had come

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up with me again he whistled explosively, popped his fingers, and made a great fuss of being at his ease. The men behind us began to drop away at their home corners, where, in the main, their women were waiting for them.

The children were looking out for us at the corner of Shank Painter, Aggie hopping up and down with little screams, Joe holding the baby as high as he could manage. It was a custom on such occasions for Aggie and the baby to ride home aloft on Dedos's shoulders, while Joe towed out at the end of my arm. This night the boy looked up at me and then retired to the further side of his father.

Agnes met us at the door, kissed her husband, her hands covered with flour sticking out rigidly over his shoulders, and tried to smile at me, but could not.

"When did they come?" I could not waste time with diplomacy.

"Last night."

"Has she been here to-day?"

"Joe—Joe—"

"Tell me, Agnes."

"No."

During the earlier part of the evening meal she made a brave show of gaiety, ignoring the fact that I scarcely touched my food, and rippling that queer signal of her mirth which I have come to call her "amateur laugh," for the Handkerchief Lady's girl never learned to laugh, really.

But before supper was done with she had to turn silent and preoccupied under the general chill. Only Aggie and the baby seemed to be untouched,

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and went on with their playing and babbling as usual, till their mother cried to them sharply:

"Be—be—*be* quiet."

Heaven knows how she ever happened upon that impossible combination of words. It was a sort of unwitting treachery—an innocent mine to shatter time and space and set me back once more, a child, in my father's house, miles down-shore. For that little word, repeated thrice in crescendo, with the longer word to follow, was an old formula of my mother's, to use when Man'el and I had worn her near to the breaking-point.

Coming now, so perfect in its very inflexion and so utterly without warning, it seemed to have blasted open some long-unused cell of my brain. My mother moved about the kitchen, clattering the supper things and singing an Island song in her boyish alto. My father's feet scuffed the boards of the wharf outside in the dark, where the tide whispered along the margins of the Creek. I had no care—nothing in all the world to turn away from. Little Man'el charged through from the front room, astride of a broom-stick, crying that it was a black horse, and I caught its flying tail and screamed back at him that it wasn't a horse at all, but only a dirty stick. A squabble grew out of that; and then my mother's, "Be—be—*be* quiet."

It all rushed about me in the fraction of an instant, but for that breath it was very real. All the things that life had brought me were wiped away without a quiver of regret. I had a feeling of momentary and miraculous rest. Then the things this night held for me crowded about that

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fragile moment and smothered it with their bitter actuality.

I got up from the table, went over and took up my hat and coat which I had flung on a chair. I felt that I must get out of that room—anywhere, I said to myself, although in the back of my mind I knew well where I should go before I was through with it. Dedos turned in his chair.

“W’at y’ goeen’ do?” He put the same form of question for the third time that evening.

“I don’t know,” I said.

“I go weeth you.”

He pushed back his chair with a screaming of wood on wood, cast a meaning glance at Agnes, and took up his coat.

“I guess I won’t go out anyway,” I lied.

I moved into my room and closed the door, but my coat was still over my arm and my hat in my hand. I had not deceived either of them in the least, as I was to know later.

After a few minutes I went out by the other door, slipped through the kitchen, and gained the back street by way of a neighbor’s yard and a break in the shoring-wall. But I had not gotten away altogether alone. In the garden I had been almost taken off my feet by a weight hurled at the back of my knees, and there was Tim bidding me welcome home in a great destruction of Agnes’s melon-vines, fairly beside himself to find me come while he was away at his foraging. I have often speculated as to what would have come of that night had the dog been ten minutes later in coming to the house.

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It is right where I came out, at the upper end of Shank Painter, that the back street runs along the shoulder of Pink Hill, so that one may look down from this point over all the town to the eastward. It lay below me that night, unfamiliar and mysterious and flat, robbed of all its features by the blanket of the dark, and only defined here and there, like a figure in navigation, by the dots of occasional window lights. It was so quiet that I could hear a sow grunting in Crazy Tony's sty, away over the brow of the hill. Tim heard it, too, and barked.

There are at least a score of people in Old Harbor now who heard that barking of Tim's, and will give circumstantial proof of it by telling just what they were doing at the time. It is curious that they are all so faithful in this point and are still willing to give Sammy North credit for having seen me coming down the front street at almost that identical moment. In reality, of course, I never set foot in the front street for an hour after that, and then it was from the other end of town that I entered it.

Tim would have stood there and barked at Crazy Tony's sow for half the night had I not kicked him gently in the ribs and told him to be quiet. For there was another sound abroad that I wanted to hear. Somewhere far away down-street a fight was going on. It came up to me only as a confused and sinister rumor, troubling the night air.

I wanted to turn to the westward and walk away through the soft blind ways of the back country. Agnes had said that Allie was worn out. Well, I was worn out, too. I was utterly and bitterly exhausted by the piling-up of things I

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could not understand, by beating my hands against impalpable walls, by trying to think and trying not to think. Just then I was a skulker, a weakling. I overwhelmed myself with pity; I hoodwinked myself with a gesture of nobility. If there was to be a choosing that night for Allie Snow, I would not be about to throw my weight one way or the other. I understood that the other man would be there, with *his* weight in the balance. Yes; but then, if Allie's love meant anything in the world, she would come to me no matter what the path that led. I had become the lowest of the low—a fatalist, bitter and self-pitying.

Tim wanted to go to the westward too. He pointed his quivering muzzle up-street, his after-part writhing and his great block of a head filled with ecstatic visions of the monsters there would be to save me from in the back country on a night like this. He turned an appealing eye and saw me standing divided between the east and the west. Then he growled in the shallow way that was his challenge to romance and made two or three stiff-legged bounds away; and I followed him, turning my back upon the town.

Shank Painter, the street, gives way imperceptibly to Shank Painter, the road. When you have passed Joseph Deal's farm-house you are through with the street, and a moment later the scrub flings over the ridge of a hummock and swallows the thoroughfare.

It is hard to remember clearly what happened to me in Shank Painter road. I have a recollection of the sand terrible about my feet, of stars coming and

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going in brief flashes across breaks in the trees, of a gray blur, which was the spot on Tim's neck, moving here and there in front of me. My dumbness had spoiled his night: though he poked a nose into every bush, with his invisible stump of tail imploring me, there was never a fabulous monster to lie in wait.

After I left Shank Painter I must have covered many miles. Once I was near the town again, and the murmur of its life came to me over a draw in the dunes. My feet caught up the meshes of a weir-net, fresh tarred and drying on the ground; from that I knew I was in Cold Storage fields, and doubled into the north again.

I remember it as a long time afterward that I found myself in Paul Dyer's road. Whether I came there by the cut across Duncan's field or through the gravel-pits I cannot say, for the sudden knowledge of my whereabouts came to me out of a blank. Then I hurried along to the music of sand thrown out on dead leaves, over the First Ridge, down the slope of the little pines, and stood in the center of the red amphitheater.

Here was a fine place to come for a man who was trying to run away from himself and his thoughts and memories. The ghosts of so many things came and crowded about me—one of them was the ghost of a day in spring when the crouching woods rocked with the coming of life, and Allie and I stood apart looking at each other and knowing suddenly that she was a woman and I a man.

Then I knew I must see Allie this night, whatever might come of it.

XVIII

I ENTER A CERTAIN HOUSE WITHOUT INVITATION

IN my wandering and stumbling about the back country it seemed that half the night must have worn away before I stood in the hollow. It could not have taken me more than ten minutes to get back to town, now that I went with intention. There is an old and nearly obliterated trail that leads from the edge of Paul Dyer's fields almost in a straight line to the back street behind Cold Storage. This precarious passage I took at a half-run, making nothing of the plunge and scramble through the gravel-pits or the cat-vine that tore at my legs. I was breasting the hill that hangs over the town when the distant note of the bell in Town Hall striking the hour came up to me.

I counted the strokes, and when it came to nine and rang no more I was bewildered.

"I must have lost count," I said to myself. "I must have lost count." I repeated it over and over mechanically.

Then I plunged on down the hill with more impetus than I could manage, fetching up in a great row of cans and broken bottles at the back of Gary Betts's chicken-house, where it was as black as a pit. I could hear Tim thrashing around in

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the brush above and whining because he could not get to me, while I lay there in I know not what manner of rubbish, gaining back a little of my lost breath. When I did move off in the dark I was pursued by old Gary's tremulous threats of violence from a back window. He has never known there was anything more than a marauding dog out there that night and so missed a niche in the temple of fame. In the front street I met a man by the name of Silvado, spare hand on the schooner *Belle Jason*. He stopped me under a smoky lamp at Bargo Street.

"They raisin' hell up-street t'-night," he said.

I grunted without inflexion, for I wanted to go on. He was a spare man with gray side-whiskers chopped off below the ears—the kind of a man who gets his hand into your coat and clings there at the slightest pretext for conversation. He started to say something more, but stopped in the middle of the first word and stared at me in gathering wonder.

"What's the matter with your clo'es?" he marveled.

I looked down and saw for the first time that my clothing had suffered desperately in the back country. A sharp branch had gashed the length of my left sleeve; I was covered with pine needles and shreds of bark; the cat-vine had whipped the bottoms of my trousers to strings.

"Where you been?" Silvado pressed me. I shook his hand off and went on my way. I can see him yet standing under the flare of the kerosene-lamp, his right hand hanging in space and his brown teeth ajar in a grimace of astonishment.

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It seemed to me that I passed a hundred persons in that short progress up the front street—black figures growing out of the gloom ahead and blotting away in the darkness behind. Occasionally one of them spoke to me, but the word always caught up with me after the speaker had vanished. Only one stopped me. That was Father Ventura, standing under another street-lamp and holding up his hand. "You're going fast, boy," he said.

"I'm going far," I answered him, ill at ease, but not wishing to show it.

"How far?" he asked. His steady eyes took me in, up and down, without surprise. I blurted out my answer with a sudden audacity born of bitterness.

"To hell."

He did not speak for a moment, but stepped to my side and looked down at the pair of shadows we cast on the yellow floor of the street. I stared at them too, without an inkling of what he was about. Then he moved around in front of me, and my shadow swallowed his, so that there was no break in the silhouette. Father Ventura was old, but his shoulders were as straight now as they had been when I was a child and he the biggest man in all the Cape. He stood away, shaking his white mane at me.

"To hell? Joe, you're a big man to be going to that place without a fight."

"Fight?" I cried at him. "And where does your fighting get you? Your tramps and roustabouts fight—they're fighting all the time, because they're scared to do anything else. I tell you a man never

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uses his fists till he's licked." I was going on with rising violence when the absurdity of our positions suddenly came over me.

"Why—why—why, look here," I stammered, in a desperate search for words. It was a moment before I found them, and then I exploded:

"Why, look here; you're the person that preaches about peace on earth—and—and kindness—and being humble and all."

"Yes," he mused, "and I preach other things."

Then he changed front with the subtlety of a finished actor. His eyes narrowed to slits. He thrust his head toward me.

"And how about the girl—Allie?" he questioned me, in the lowered tones of perfect discretion. "Allie—do you think Allie's being—being—ah—straight? What?"

"Wha—what—straight?" I seemed to hear myself saying it from a great distance in a queer, high key. I was not putting a question; I had understood his meaning. It was simply a habit of utterance reacting idly while I fought off the debris of a world which had been broken. For an instant I was helpless. I pitied myself because I was in pain. The narrow eyes were studying me. I wondered if they were pitying me too.

After that instant came the instant of revulsion, when the fact that it could not be true flared up in my brain. The shock of it, like cold water, made me blind for a moment. I felt the tightening of muscles all up and down my body. Somehow I realized that my hands were curving and coming up to feel for the throat of this priest who had done

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her an injury that no years could altogether mend, for no procession of years could ever make me forget that I had believed him.

But his eyes were too steady. Something inside of me raised the abrupt shout that this was an unthinkable thing I was doing. Then my hands fell limp, and I turned and ran away up-street because I was afraid of myself. I did not go so quickly, however, but I carried a picture of Father Ventura standing in the ragged spot of light, his head hanging down in utter despair and his hands out in signal of failure. Afterward I remembered the words he said.

"If only he could—if only he could have hit me—once—"

I never knew a better man than that.

Near Onslaught's Wharf I passed through the first outpost of the steamer-men. They were lounging peaceably in a black string along the fence. I knew them by the broad words of the Provinces they spoke and the names of Arichat and Digby and New Glasgow going between them. I heard them saying to one another that they would be seeing their homes before long now, because it was so late in the fall, and one was prophesying an open winter in Lunenburg.

The square was crowded with them, and bodies of them were coming and going on Long Wharf, at whose outer end the cluster of steamers blazed like a small and prosperous city. In the square the broad men, with their chests bare to the night air and their black, shiny caps thrust far back on their heads, tormented the checker-board lights

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from the shops with their continual moving up and down. They appeared to be restless and were uncommonly silent, like men who were waiting for something. Only in one corner was there any great commotion—at one of the shore corners of the wharf men in a ring were shouting and laughing and slapping shoulders noisily.

There was no need to tell me who sat on a pile in the core of that loud ring. I could see his flaming head and the flaming hair on his chest in the glow of a casual match, across the restless floor of the caps. I could hear his laughter booming above the common ruck of laughter. Jock Crimson was tremendous that night—roaring, abandoned to the seven ecstatic devils of vitality, drunk with the blood in his own veins, gorged with the cold, sweet air.

His roving eye picked me out of the scattering at the corner of the square. He lifted his hairy arms, bare almost to the shoulders, and hailed me, full-throated and jovial.

"Ahoy—cap'n! How's—things?"

Every eye in the square had turned in my direction, and all were waiting in silence to hear what I should say. I raised my arms, exactly as Crimson had done, and shouted back at him:

"Fine."

That was all. There was no tumult. The men immediately in front of me crowded back upon their fellows, opening a lane along the street side of the square. Through this passage I shouldered my way, and it closed up behind me. I heard Tim barking away under the forest of legs, but I had no

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time to stop for him. One man whispered as I passed: "Thot's the monn I *hov* been tellin' you of—thot's him—" and I knew there was a youngster fresh from the Provinces at his shoulder.

By contrast with the crush in the square, coming again between the walls of the front street was like bursting into a deserted hallway from the whirl and blaze of a ball-room. And yet, even here there were three times as many people as one would see in the whole thoroughfare of an ordinary noon. They sprawled on every door-step, laughing and tossing jibes and epithets back and forth across the passage with a singular and unaccountable good humor. They may have been "raising hell up-street" earlier in the evening, but now they were waiting—like the men in the square. None of them commented on my passing, and none spoke to me—only turned and watched me.

I found myself in the oblong of light falling from the windows of Danzio's store. Danzio was visible inside, moving about his trading with the discreet, soft tread which many very fat people possess. His face shone with the faint perspiration which never seemed to leave it, and his eyes, made very small and bead-like by the encroaching puffs of flesh around them, were here and there over the score or more of steamer-men who were buying fruit and candy. His boy tended the back part of the room, where he could be seen slipping about with no more noise than his father.

Danzio came softly toward the front of the shop to take the money from a man who had filled his pockets with apples. Then he paused in the open

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doorway to look out at the night and mop his forever-moist hands on a sack. After a moment he noticed me standing there. Immediately he came padding down the pair of steps, edged his bulk apologetically between a couple of loungers, and spoke to me in an unctuous whisper.

"They're getting better, these po'gie-men. They'll be a good thing for this town one day. They used to take my fruit and chase me out of the back window for pay, and that is hard for a— a man of my size. To-night they buy—they pay their money quiet and go. I'm taking in a pile of money." He held up a half-dollar between his oily thumb and forefinger as a symbol. "They're a good thing for this town," he repeated in my ear, and left me for the interior of the shop with an abrupt and soundless rush.

Danzio was a man of reason, and Danzio was making money. My eyes fell upon a little knot of figures just within an alleyway across the street. There were three girls in the company; one of them I recognized by the embarrassed giggle with which she tried so hard to match the old, old pleasantries of the others. I knew her well, and I knew how little she was meant to be there, with her twelve years, and her father away at the Georges—the captain of a schooner, too. This one night she would be safe, because for some unknown reason the fleet was waiting. She might be all right the next time they came ashore, but not conceivably more than those two times.

The business of the square and the spectacle of Danzio's fat complacency had had me near forget-

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ting the errand I was about. The spectacle of little Annie Duarte there in the alleyway brought it back to me with a poignant and bitter shock. I forgot there were people in the front street to be amused at the picture of Captain Joseph Manta lumbering up its course; I must see Allie.

In all that impetuous rush from the hollow it had never occurred to me to wonder just what I was to do when I did see Allie. And now that my resolution had come to its second wind, I had no other idea but that of physical sight of her.

I doubled into the street of the three angles, running heavily, and but vaguely aware of the crowd of steamer-men about its entrance, although for a half-mile back I had not noticed a one of their kind. It was only later that I was conscious that one or two of them grinned at me and spoke under curved hands to their fellows.

There is no illumination in the street of the three angles other than such stray gleams as may struggle out of the shuttered windows along its course, and on this uneasy night even these sporadic stragglers were choked out and the low barriers of the passage blotted away in the general gloom.

Here was the last place in the world, however, where I needed a light to find my way. I drove along without easing my pace, picked up the gutter hollow at Small's Angle on a true course, bore to the left with my shoe clicking securely against Lem Dow's front fence till it came to an end and I was adrift in the featureless dark.

A few yards ahead and a little to the right should be the second turning, from which I could see the

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light in the hall window of the apple-green house. I knew there was no shutter on that window. I could have strode on to that angle and turned to the breadth of a hair had I not slackened my pace now for the first time to wonder what I was about. It suddenly came over me that I had been making a spectacle of myself, with wild eyes and wrecked clothing, running through the length of Old Harbor, and that I was upon the verge of being a greater fool now bursting into the house to confront that straight, slim, collected girl, with no words but the whine of a cast-off lover and no excuse but a wild impulse upon which even I could not lay hands.

Well, I could go as far as the turn and look at the lighted window; at least I could do that without a reason. But that moment of hesitation had broken the straight drive, and now I had to grope my way, one hand out and one foot scraping before me like a blind man's cane. It seemed to me that the darkness had become ponderable, draining in from the last confines of space to crush me down. It seemed that I must be creeping forward in this blind progress for an unconscionable distance—that I must have passed the corner goal twice over, with no light opening out to the left. I began to dread something I could not give a form, and I fought off that dread by whispering over and over to myself, "A man goes slower than he thinks in the dark; I'm going slower than I seem to be."

Then my outstretched hand recoiled at the touch of something cold and hard.

So it was true, after all. I had come past the corner, clear, crossed the bending lane, and brought

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up with my fingers against Tony Silva's stone wall. The apple-green house was over there to my left, as black as a house of death.

While I stood there in the dark trying to think it seemed to me that I heard a crackling of twigs and the breathing and rustling of many people in the passage between the "fish school" and the rear of Tony Silva's house. I remembered now the crowd of steamer-men about the entrance of the street, and it came to me that those men in the passage would be there for a purpose. But just now there was no time for me to speculate upon that purpose. Something was wrong in the apple-green house; I knew this as surely as I knew that I should go in and find out what it was.

There was no need for groping now; the miracle of instinct had come back to me, and I walked straight through the cavern of the gloom till my hand fell over the latch of the gate. Without hesitating or shrinking at the clamor its opening raised in the hanging silence, I passed into the yard and along the southern side of the house till I came to the rear. There was never a cranny of light to be seen on the three walls of the house I had traversed.

I stood among the dank garden plants and did not know what to do. There came the discreet crying of the gate on its hinges and cautious footfalls on the tiny plot of grass at the street side of the building. It began to dawn on me that these footfalls might have something to do with me. But still I could not manage to forget that I was Joseph Manta, skipper of the crack vessel of the

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Old Harbor fleet, and a man of weight in the community. Even the whisper of men moving in the blind alley at the rear of Snow's yard and the knowledge that I was surrounded did not seem a great matter to me. I walked deliberately toward the fourth or northern side of the house.

And on the fourth side I found what I was looking for—a thin wafer of light over the kitchen door. I moved forward without hesitation and knocked gently. In the succeeding silence I was sure that I heard a sound inside, a stealthy scraping as of a chair-leg on boards. After that, nothing. A foot crackled on the gravel path behind my back.

Without waiting longer I put my shoulder to the door. It opened easily, and I entered, closing it behind me.

XIX

TEN O'CLOCK

A SINGLE candle, guttering on the table and slowly smothering in its own tallow, illuminated the room with a sick flare. At first the place seemed empty, and I knew it could not be, for I had heard that sound of a moving chair.

There was something horrible about this quiet and vacancy that I knew was not a vacancy. Of a sudden, as I stood there gawking about, it seemed as though a hundred boards were creaking all through the empty chambers of the house. The muffled footfalls on the gravel outside turned sinister in my ears and set the cords along my spine to twanging. For a moment it was as though I heard the whole of Old Harbor full of footfalls, thousands of them moving in the lanes.

There came a creaking from the corner. I saw a piece of furniture tremble.

"Who's there?" I demanded. I felt a shout in my throat, but only half a voice came out of my mouth. There was no answer. In the following pause the joints of the building seemed to scream, and the thousand footfalls came toward me. The impenetrable silence of that corner behind the stove had made an old woman of me while the

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clock on the shelf was counting twenty. I put my question again, taking a step forward.

"Who's there?"

At that the silence was broken, if by nothing more than a soft scratching along the floor. There was something to see now—a dirty yellow slipper and a fragment of thin ankle had protruded convulsively from behind the stove. It was not till now that I realized how frightened I had been, for the revulsion left me covered with sweat. Mr. Snow had worn that slipper for years.

"Snow," I commanded, this time aloud, "come out of there! Do you hear? Come."

The slipper withdrew from sight, and the old man's face, haggard and twisted, appeared over the back of a chair. The spectacle of his terror gave me a queer feeling in my stomach.

"What's the matter with you—where's Allie?"

"They—they're all around," he quavered, holding up his narrow, livid hands.

"Where's Allie?" I repeated.

"I'm an old man, Joe—Joe, my boy—I'm an old man. They wouldn't harm an old man, would they? You wouldn't let 'em harm me, would you, Joe?" I tried to pity him and found that I could not, being too full of pity for myself. And it might be that he was playing with me again.

"Tell me quick; where's Allie gone?"

"Oh—oh—it wa'n't *then*. It was after she'd gone. They come in at the door there—three—five—oh, a dozen of 'em. 'I don' know where she is,' says I. 'I swear by anything you want, I don' know where she is,' I says. An' then one of

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'em knocked over the chair an' I fell under it. 'You will tell me where the gal is or I'll kick a hole through your head, old Mr. Slick,' says he, swingin' his boot right close t' my head. I don' know what would 've happened in the end if Crimson hadn't 've come in an' shooed 'em all out like a school o' bait. Then he give me— No, no—he never give me nothin'—honest t' God, he never give me a thing—" He had turned frightened again, and crafty, peering at me suspiciously as he screamed out his denials and convulsively manipulating something behind his barrier.

He was a little insane. I began to understand that I could get nothing out of him, but I put my question again hopelessly. He gave no answer. He was looking past me now. The twisting of his face had ceased, leaving a horrible grimace frozen upon his features, and I could see the white of each eyeball continuous about the iris. The room was unnaturally brilliant for an instant with the death-flare of the candle. Then the blackness engulfed us.

This had happened in the infinitesimal passage of time while I was whirling to look behind me and the dark had come before my eyes had reached the door. Now I must stand there, tense and half off my balance, knowing somehow that I must not move or make a sound. A single star burned for a moment in the pit, the smoldering wick of the candle, and then it too was gone. I was afraid. There, definitely, in the lapse of minutes, a miracle had been done in me by the piling of menace upon menace; a rough hand had stripped me of that

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incubus of easy humor, and I stood naked now in the wreck and saw the monstrous world against me. I think it is better so.

My legs wavered beneath me like a baby's, my fingers were going back and forth among themselves, and I could feel my wrists dripping wet against my coat-sleeves. I stared against the impenetrable wall of the dark till my eyeballs grew tight and dry. My chattering spirit cried out for something that I might see. It seemed to me that if I could only once *see* the thing there in the gloom—the thing that had come without a sound to set a grin of horror on the old man's face—then I could throw off this sickness which had laid hold upon me. I was in an agony to get my hands on something they could tear.

And now, as the memory of light faded out of my eyes, I began to see. I had thought when I was outdoors that nothing could be blacker, but there was yet some seepage of light abroad in the world, for now I could make out a vague streak of gray before me, as though a dirty brush had been dragged across a dead, black wall. Some one had opened the door a little ways—and was still opening it, for the blur widened as I watched. And some one was crouching in the lower half of the rectangle, marring the symmetry of the stroke.

The aperture grew wider and wider by imperceptible additions. For a moment the pallor of the open air showed at the side of the intruder's bulk, then it was wiped out by another figure, and I was conscious of still others crowding behind. It made no difference to me; I wanted sound and

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light and motion. I must go. I was beaten, and I must fight.

I have never known whether I shouted or not. I remember lifting my fists level with my shoulders and running at that streak of gray with all the blind strength in my hulk. And then I remember that I received a cut across the shins from a chair I had forgotten, and the spectacle of the pale blur wheeling up in an arc out of sight, the stunning crash of my weight falling flat out on the floor, and the hot smother of men, battering, tearing, breathing hard, crushing me down and down, binding the muscles of my back and shoulders in knots of exquisite pain. It may have been finished in a second, but my memory is of a long night of meaningless struggle, when I was forever afraid of my eyes and the back of my neck. At that moment of my life I am perfectly sure that I was a coward.

The men worked without words and with a perfect understanding of one another that only explained itself later. The only sound above the creaking and straining and tearing of the attack came from the invisible corner by the stove where Snow chattered crazily in his terror.

In the end my elbows were drawn up behind my back and bound with a piece of line; my knees and ankles were done up in the same fashion; and I lay there like a bag of meal, with half of my weight bearing on the point of my chin.

My brain refused to work. This overturning of my world had set me adrift without a chart to tell the way. I was dazed. I was conscious of

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whispering above me and the tentative withdrawal of my burden of assailants, and next of the crackle of a match. In a detached sort of way I wondered what they were going to do with me; now I was helpless I had no further fear of actual pain.

The flare of the match came nearer. By the glow on the floor I saw it jerked abruptly and extinguished by the violence of the start. In the darkness an exclamation sounded close to my ear. Something about it set my skin pricking and my brain whirling with the conviction that this night had gone utterly insane.

Another match exploded. Many hands clutched at me and turned me over to face the glare, blinking like a puppy. But blinking as I was, I could still make out the broad red face of Dedos staring down at mine in the greatest bewilderment. Over one shoulder Gussie James's mouth hung open. Over the other Joe Bickers peered down at me with little popping eyes. The crew of the *Arbitrator* regarded their commander.

I have often thought how fine a memory it would have made for me if I could have thrown out some easy phrase, if only a "Well, what do you think of me?" to make them gape still wider at my unconcern. But in place of that I must wag my lips and let my head fall back on the floor, to lie there swimming in a fever of exhaustion.

It took only a moment to have me free and sitting in the chair that had been my most fortunate undoing. The men shuffled about with subdued restlessness, making their astonishment with gesturing hands and brows, and whispering in knots.

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Dedos hovered ponderously over me in an agony of embarrassment. The situation was far beyond the diplomatic powers of Dedos, even at his calmest moment. Now he snapped his fingers in crescendo, like a huge and foolish goose-fish flapping in the bottom of a dory, and blurted out:

"We thought you was *heem*."

I nodded my entire understanding rather wanly.

"W're's *her*?" he questioned, a new anxiety looming on his brow. I waved toward the corner.

"Ask her father; I don't know. She's gone."

"Her *father*—" It was evident that he had not been aware of the old man's presence before this. And now I saw a Dedos I had never known before in the world. My Dedos was good-natured, grotesquely anxious to be liked—his fits of anger blustering and short-lived. But here was a Dedos angry without any bluster, his face working very slowly with a pale and malignant fury.

"Tell me w're Allie eez, you—you—I don' know what to call you. Tell me."

My eyes went from Dedos to the old man in the corner. Where had I seen such a horror drawn on a human face before? I remembered slowly. He had looked so, cringing and unbalanced, that day when Agnes stood over him in the dim hallway. It was sickening. He chattered.

"Yes—yes—I'll tell you—I'll tell you anything—only don't look at me—that way—"

"Speak up—speak up."

"She's gone t' the dance—honest t' God she has. Don't ye b'lieve me?"

"W'at you got there—huh?" Dedos advanced

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to the screen, callous to the man's rising hysteria, plunged his hand out of sight and withdrew it, after a moment's groping struggle.

"So *that's* eet, eh—I *t'ought* so. *Damn!*"

He began plucking to pieces the object in his hands, as though in abstraction. Then I saw that it was money—fragments of green bills rained from his slowly grinding hands like flakes of fish from a shredder. It gave me a feeling of coldness and numbness to watch him and understand.

"Dat red-headed — give you this?" Dedos uttered the words slowly, still in his terrible abstraction. But there was no answer to his question. The frail figure before him had collapsed across the fallen chair, and nothing but the twitching of the outstretched, thin fingers gave evidence of life.

I got hold of my faculties with a definite effort.

"He ought to be in bed," I heard myself saying in an absurdly casual tone. "Carry him up-stairs, Dedos, will you?"

"Weel I take heem up?" Dedos had turned his cold malignity now upon me. "Weel I tetch heem weeth the sole o' my boot? No. I be damned een hell beefore." He came nearer, bent down, pointed fiercely toward the corner, and cried in a whisper: "Zhoe—d'you know what dat eez—who dat eez? Do you? Do you?"

As I have said before, I must have known, somewhere in my brain. After all, had I not once stood before a dwelling in the dunes and seen a certain man frightened in the dark?

"He is the Handkerchief Lady's—he is your

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Agnes's father." I said it without any particular wonder. Yes, I must have known.

Strangely enough, my utterance seemed to act as a sedative to Dedos's tautened nerves, and he turned and spoke to two of the crew, telling them to carry old Snow up-stairs and leave him on a bed. When they had gone away with the limp burden swaying between them I got to my feet, stretched my sore limbs, and went out to stand on the gravel before the kitchen door. The crew came out by twos and threes and stood about me. Dedos followed and slouched in the doorway with his fat elbows propped against the frame. Already his passion had drained away, leaving him sluggish.

"She's gone to the dance," I said to myself, aloud. Dedos took it up.

"Dey ain't no dance to-night," he said, letting his arms drop and turning a heavy, interrogative head about him. It was little Tony Emanuel, indistinguishable between two of the larger men, who answered him.

"The po'gie-men's got one up to St. Peter's. I heard tell of it in the front street."

Allie Snow had not been to a town dance in Old Harbor in the last four years, to my certain knowledge. If the old man had spoken truth—and the circumstances made me believe he had—then there was indeed something wrong here.

Dedos, sluggish Dedos, who must forever be the one to set me in motion, lowered his bulk from the door-step with a sigh and grasped my elbow.

"Tek us down there," he said. "Ain't dat so?" he demanded of the men who crowded about us.

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There was a rumble of general assent. One or two tugged at their belts significantly.

"There is no need of so many—" I began, dodging the issue so manifest in the whole attitude of the crowd. "I'll go alone." I shifted to plain speech.

"You want to fight," I blurted at them. "You can't think of anything better than to fight. There's no call for a fight—this is no time—why—why, men—why, this is *my* business and no one else's. You can't make a—" I stopped, appalled at the length to which my passion had carried me. If I had gone on to say that one could never force a love by the beating of fists, then I would not have been Joseph Manta, but altogether a different person.

"This is my business," I finished, curtly.

"You kin go alone an' we follow beehind," Dedos temporized. "Mebby dat's a way t' keep us quiet, mebby." He looked up at my shaking head in appeal; then he changed front with that fire that was so amazing in the slow man, his words rumbling deep in his vitals, muffled, like subterranean heavings.

"No, you can' keep us quiet t'-night, no ways. Zhoe—Zhoe"—he curved emphatic hands, palms up, before my face—"Zhoe, dey's near a t'ousan' men hidin' around in de back streets—listen, you can hear Andy White's crew now over een Pickney's alley. Dey's more schooners een port 'n you ever see thees time of year. You deed'n' tek note—no. Dey's waitin'—an' dey ain't goeen' wait long time. Dees ain't your business, Zhoe. No, no, eet's *our* business." He was down almost double with one of his internal throes.

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I was weary of it and angry with all these hands tugging at me to-night.

"What do I care if you fight?" I cried. "Fight—and to hell with your fighting." And I turned away from the apple-green house in the direction of the back street.

All the way to St. Peter's Hall I was conscious of that dark knot of men following me along, fifty yards or so in my rear. I was aware of something else. From the mouth of every black lane that I passed came a soft rumor of life, a moving of restless boots on pebbles, a discreet cough, or only an added blackness to the night. Once or twice, out of the corner of my eye, I was sure that figures slipped out of these entrances to pass a word with my shadowy convoy.

A dance was in progress in St. Peter's, as might be known from the creaks of light under the window-shades and the bursts of music, intermittent through the swinging door. Some men were squatting on the rail of the porch smoking, and the entrance was well filled with their fellows. I shouldered my way through to the little hole in the wall, aware of the staring and whispering on all sides, and put down a piece of money before Jerry Butler, the old man who sold tickets for everything in Old Harbor. He examined my hand, then bent down and peered through the aperture at me.

"Wall, I snum to man!" he marveled, and had difficulty with my change. I left him still trying to put it straight, passed through the inner door, and stood up with my back to the orchestra.

I do not know how long I stood there. My mem-

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ory of that lapse of time is mainly of a succession of faces on contorted necks, all turned toward me, and sweeping past endlessly. A great many of the girls I knew: nearly all of the men were strangers, every one with the mark of a black cap on his forehead. I noted all this with the back of my brain: I was watching for a narrow, oval head, crowned with the shining hair I knew so well with my eyes and hands, and for a slender form that danced beyond any music the Social Orchestra would ever blow and scrape and twang.

I waited and waited, and Allie did not come past. Something was amiss with the whole dance—something I could not lay hold upon. I tried to think it out, lulling the fear that was growing in me by the assurance that she would whirl past before long. After a while I realized that a certain girl with pink ribbons in her hair had crossed my vision a dozen times. Allie was not there.

Once through the idle crowd outside I leaned against May's stone wall and tried to think. My men were banked in post-office street, opening diagonally across from me—Dedos took care to let me know it by sauntering casually out of the shadow and standing for a long while under the street-lamp opposite the hall. But I had no wish to join them.

Here was one of the bitterest moments of my life, and I gnawed at it as a sick creature will gnaw at bitter herbs. The thing that cut was that I did not know where Allie Snow was or what she was doing or thinking, while all the rest of the world knew and snickered about it. And Allie was

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a part of me—as actually a part as my right arm—yes, or the brain in my head.

There in the wan flare of the lamp I let myself go, and raved and cursed myself in the silence of my heart. I wanted to throw out my hands, beaten, and go away to another country where I might never again see any one or anything to remind me of my life. I was always one to want to be alone when hard-set.

“It’s no good,” I said aloud; “I’ll go home now, and to-morrow I’ll know where to go. The girl is not for me, and I can’t make her be if it isn’t in her heart. What—what—my God, what is it that’s come—” I broke off because there was nothing to ask, and because a shadow had come between my feet and the light. I felt that I could not stand another knowing stare from a stranger and hoisted myself on the palms of my hands to go home.

The shadow fluttered on my sleeve. I looked up, half weary, half angry. It was Gabbie Ring, the town simpleton.

He held out his left leg to get the light on it and regarded me expectantly. He was waiting for me to say something about the leap at Dunston Fair—that record leap of his that had turned his back and addled his brain twenty years ago. One always did that much for Gabbie Ring. It is a fine thing for a man with a twisted back or a twisted brain, or even a twisted heart, to have one heroic memory to live with him. But I could not bring myself to utter the formula.

“Well,” I said, “I guess I’ll be going along.”

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"Where you goin' to?" he asked, with a curious intensity and a tightening of his hand on my arm.

"Home," I answered. I shook at his hand gently, but he would not let go.

"Oh—I was thinkin' you'd be goin' up *there*—" Something in his tones and the cunning look in his face made me sink back to the wall. He shifted his footing so as to bring his right leg into the light.

"Gabbie," I said, "wasn't it you that made that long jump down at Dunston Fair a little while ago?"

"Right you are." He fairly jumped at my words. "I'm the man." His crooked figure was almost straight. After a moment's contemplation of the notable leg he settled down to tell me what he had been hunting me an hour to say.

"I was thinkin' mebby you'd be goin' up to the Ide girls'."

"The Ide girls'?" I wondered. Then I knew what had been amiss with the dance; the Ide girls had not been there.

"*She's* up there—to the Ide girls'. *An'*"—he crowded very close to me and whispered shrilly for emphasis—"an' *he's* comin' at eleven to get 'er—the big red feller. I was squattin' in the lee of a pile down to the wharf when they was tellin' it." His fingers trembled with glee on my sleeve while he chuckled over his own craft.

So the thing was settled then. The way was chosen, the plan drawn up, the time appointed, and I, Joseph Manta, must get wind of it from an eavesdropping Gabbie Ring.

I made no stir—outwardly, I believe, I was as

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calm as any man about his ordinary business. But inside I tore at myself and raged and cried out that I did not care, because they had killed the caring part of me. The night was loud with the clangor of the bell in Town Hall tower, almost above us. I was so sure it was telling eleven that I did not count. When it was gone Gabbie plucked at me once more.

"You got an hour yet," he whispered. I remember vividly the sight of his teeth that could not meet.

I had an hour. What could I do in an hour? What could I do in a hundred hours? Well, in an hour I could finish the errand upon which I had set out from the hollow. It seemed an age since I had counted nine from the hill behind Gary Betts's. If life is change, then I had lived a life in that hour.

I wanted no company now. I turned and slid over the low barrier, sauntered leisurely into the shadow between two houses, and once under cover set out at a run straight up the dune behind.

XX

DEDOS COUNTS SEVEN

GLEN STREET is about three hundred yards to the westward of St. Peter's. Three doors down from the back street on the left, a short blind lane leads back a few yards from the street. It was so close here, and so bright with the Glen Court lamp, that one might almost be in a narrow hall, with the windows of the flanking houses giving outward instead of in. The house where the Ide girls lived blocked the end of this hall, making a sort of stage with its wide porch.

I might have walked up boldly and knocked at the front door, but instinct and embarrassment in league led me round by the narrow walk to the kitchen entrance. Here I tapped gently with the tips of my fingers. I found myself breathing as laboriously as I had done on the face of the dune.

When the door opened it was no more than an inch-wide crack. I knew it was one of the sisters standing behind it by the sheen of light through a wisp of yellow hair. I pushed it open slowly and quietly and stepped in.

There were five persons in the room. The four Ide girls, all so ludicrously alike in their spare and impudent plainness that I could never tell any

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successive two apart, were doing what is technically known to the novelist as "hovering." Here was the night of their apotheosis. They were supremely, ecstatically conscious of it. Their hovering, ever to one another, had a spice of formality about it, as if they were aware that history was being made in their kitchen. And the hostility which drew them together at my intrusion had a certain insolent quality of parade in it.

Allie was in the act of rising from a chair when I first saw her. Now she stood with one hand gripping its back and the other fluttering at her throat. By that fluttering hand alone could I know that she was shaken at the sight of me, for her head was held up straight and her eyes were steady and level.

If she had set out deliberately to drive me mad she could not have done it better than by standing there with her simple, ungarnished beauty in the midst of the Ide girls' drab adornment. The knife to stab me had been whetted well indeed, for she wore her hair as I had asked her to wear it for me long ago, parted and brushed down to frame her temples. So she had thought of this for the coming of that roaring and lusty conqueror.

Well, I was through with my errand. I had seen her. I had pushed the door open with a momentary burst of determination, but now it drained away, leaving me dull and foolish. Without a word or sign those four had put me in the wrong.

"I just thought I'd like to see—to look at you, Allie," I floundered, reaching for the door-knob. I have always been slow about words—a failing, I

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believe, common among men of much size. They continued to regard me in silence.

"I wanted to look at you—once—" I tried again, pleading, for all that I prompted myself fiercely that I was not the one to be pleading. But my head was terribly heavy and dull.

But it was next to the youngest, Florrie Ide, who spoke, with no concealment of her hostility.

"Well, you seen her, ain't you?" she cried, and added with hot scorn: "Breakin' into folkses' houses this time o' night—the *idee*." She appealed to the others if it were not so, turning her head in spiteful jabs on her long, thin neck. Another instant and they would have been down upon me in full cry, if Allie had not held them back with a warning hand.

"Will you girls go into the other room a few minutes?" she asked.

"No," Florrie screamed, "we won't do no such thing. I know what 'll happen if that dirty ginny gets you alone—I do."

But she had overshot the mark. The others, in a panic at Allie's look, hustled her away, raging shrilly and kicking at them with her pipe-stem legs.

Neither of us spoke for a moment after the door had slammed on their commotion. I was beginning to see more clearly now that my eyes were more accustomed to the light and the edge of my embarrassment worn off a little. Allie was not in such perfect control of herself as I had imagined at first. Willing or unwilling, she let me see how terribly she was suffering. The fluttering hand had left the blue records of its fingers on the white neck

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when it came away, and the eyes that were so steady were narrowed to keep them so. As by a flare of lightning, I saw all that night in a new aspect. I stepped closer and stood over her, my spine straight and tingling, as under the blows of a welcome lash.

"Allie," I cried—"Allie, you're afraid of me. You were frightened half to death when I pushed that door open."

She gave a convulsive little gasp at that and looked up into my face, her own pressed between her two hands. Her eyes had grown large, and I had the curious feeling that they were fighting to be glad. Oh, why was I so slow of wit? If I could but have read that tentative and fearful light, men would not have died in Old Harbor that night.

She took her hands from her cheeks and reached up timidly to touch my breast. I felt them there, fumbling and plucking at the cloth.

"Joe—ah, Joe," she said, her chin raised and her head shaking slowly, "*I am* afraid of you, Joe."

I looked down straight into her eyes for a long time. I was playing a game with myself. So long as I stood above her, the one of whom she had been so fearful that she had run away in secret, so long, perhaps, I might shut away the black remembrance of all the sweetness that was going out of my life that night.

Poor, poor Allie Snow. What I did not know was that she was playing a game of her own, a braver game, a more hopeless game than mine. She was trying to beat her harried spirit into a fear of me.

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Her right hand slid up and lay on my cheek. It was the same gesture of unspeakable caress with which she used to draw my head down to hers, when she would press them close together, cheek against cheek, so that we should "think the same, same, *same* thoughts."

"Allie," I groaned, all the fight gone out of me—"Allie, sweetest Allie, you mustn't be afraid of me. God knows you have nothing to fear from me—you or the man. There's nothing in the world that any of us can do to change things by the width of a hair. Don't you think I know that a heart can't be driven or coaxed where it doesn't go of itself? And don't you believe I'm kind enough to look at that and not try to dodge it? Oh, girl, I love you, I love you, I love you, and I want you to be happy more than anything else I know in the world."

And then that evil thing which has pursued me all my days to make me say to myself, "No, I will never ask," drove me away from her. I stepped back and waited.

"If she is coming, she will come now," I told myself. But what was this that she was doing? I had wrung myself out in those last words; I had felt her hand dragging at my cheek; I had seen her eyes swimming with memories of us; her body had been close to mine in that intimate touch which, in its own way, transcends anything else in the world. And now her hands were hanging down at her sides, and all the light was gone out of her lowered eyes. I had a troubled sense of having seen an attitude like that in another

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person that night, but I did not follow the memory back. I know now; it was Father Ventura, when I left him standing in the circle of light.

"Well," I said, I guess there isn't anything more for us to say." I turned and opened the door.

"Good night, Allie."

But she, with a gesture whose heroism I was long in knowing, commanded me not to go.

"Joe—Joe—you *can't* go like that. *Listen.* I want to know something. I want you to tell me. *Is the right thing always the right thing?"*

She was watching me with a breathless intensity that made a world hang on my answer. If I could only have known for what she was appealing! But I did not. I was dumb and bewildered, and I stumbled over my words.

"Is the right thing always the right thing? Why, Allie—I—I don't know. It *must* be—why, it seems to me it—"

I went no further. That last desperate spark of light had gone out of her eyes and she waved me away with a listless hand.

"All right, Allie," I said. "I don't know what it is. Good night."

And then I stepped out into the night that was far from good, knowing that the morning would be a very long time in coming for me. I could not help turning on the walk outside and looking back at her through the doorway. I suppose I should not have done that.

She had sunk down sideways on the chair, with her body twisted about and her head buried in her arms, which were flung over the back of the chair.

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For a long time I watched her, and she lay there without stirring, except that the curve of her body sank lower and lower. The quiet of the night was disturbed by the rustle of many feet coming abruptly within earshot at the mouth of the court and passing out again as suddenly on the way to the front street. After that I heard a single clang of the bell to the eastward and knew that I had finished my errand in half the hour given me.

Allie had heard it too. She sat up hurriedly and looked at the clock. Then she got up and walked across the floor to a small mirror hanging near the inner door, where she patted her hair and smoothed out the lines which had come into her face while she held it there in her arms. Her back was toward me, but in the glass I could see how wan she was and how she tried to smile, and tried it again and again. After that she walked about aimlessly, turning her head every moment to look at the clock. She was waiting for her love to come.

I left her there practising her happiness and went out into the Glen street. I meant to go home, but before I had gone a dozen yards the unbearable thought of four closed walls turned me back toward the water-front.

I passed across the front street and into the gloom of the covered passage that leads to Joe Smith's lumber-wharf. I remember the thought, half bitter and half whimsical, that the world had indeed turned over, for a tank had been dripping into the passage all day and now the stars ahead gleamed up at me from inconceivable depths, mirrored in the pools among the boards. I tramped along with a

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certain mechanical avoidance of lumber-stacks and abandoned carts till I came to the outer end of the wharf and stood facing the quiet harbor, with a silent schooner at berth on either side of me. Their crews were probably asleep below, but for all this I was alone here, as I wanted to be.

The harbor was so flat in the chill and breathless air that the riding-lights of all the scattered schooners told twice on the beaded tapestry of the night, and where the double conflagration of the steamer-fleet made a brilliant spot a quarter of a mile down-shore it seemed that the embers were stirring and crackling, from the rumor of their life that floated across the space of water to me. And here was a strange thing. The quiet was so complete that the sound of a lanyard adrift on the forward shrouds of one of the lumber-boats and tapping softly against the side came distinctly to my ears. The leap of a fish between wharves raised a veritable gale of turbulence. But behind this hang-veil of silence I could hear the voice of the whole town, moving with life and whispering for a league along the shore. I can only think of it as a silence with a background of sound.

My arms were heavy and without feeling. I sat down on the seaward side of a lumber-pile, with my hands hanging loosely over my knees. My brain was idle for a long time. I stared out at the water. There came a time when I was aware that I had been counting the vessels' lights over and over and over. Then I fell to doing it again, even debating whether I should add Long Point to the total. It has always been a pleasant thing to

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me that in all that dreary space of staring over the water no thought of its healing touch ever entered my mind.

By and by I heard a sound of footsteps in the passage at the shore end of the wharf. The crews were not asleep in their vessels, then. I hunched myself as close as I could to the sheltering boards and hoped that they might pass me by unnoticed. I began to speculate as to what kind of coasters these two vessels might be. As a usual thing they would carry four men apiece, but here came a rumbling that no eight men could ever raise on the hollow drum of the wharf. I believe I did realize what the truth was before I heard Dedos's voice quarreling softly with the haphazard footing among the timber.

If they had come this far, they must have had reason for thinking I was there, and it would do me good to skulk in my half-shelter till they unearthed me like a shivering rat. It was not till I felt the ache of moving that I knew how long I had been sitting there.

"Dedos," I called, "what are you after? This is Joe."

His grunt of relief and a salvo from his popping fingers assured me that I was the quarry. The whole crew of the *Arbitrator* was with him. As they advanced upon me they made up an absurd resemblance to a night assault under brisk fire, with a man here and there dropping down in the ranks and cursing with subdued volubility over a wounded shin or ankle.

They would have crowded about me, but Dedos

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led me away behind my pile of boards, waving them to stay back. His whole round person quivered with portentous excitement.

"I got sometheeng to tell you," he whispered. "I found out sometheeng. De girl 's up t' d' Ideses'—an'—an'"—he thrust the fingers that refused to be quiet behind his broad back—"an' dat red debbil eez comeen' dare at 'leven t' tek 'er weeth heem. Zhoe, d'you hear dat?"

"I know all about it," I said, trying to show him how tired I was and sick of his persistent meddling. "She's happy, Dedos. Let her be."

Dedos seemed to have lost the power of speech. He opened his mouth and sucked in a huge breath that whistled across his bared teeth. Then he raised his chunky arms over his head like a stone-breaker balancing to crush a mighty rock. He stood up there so long, thick and black against the delicate tracery of the schooner's rigging, that my impatience grew beyond me. I broke out in a tirade against him.

"My God, why can't you people leave me alone? You hound me around like a criminal, you do. There's no use trying to make you understand; all you know is to hit out at anything you happen to see in the dark. You think you've got something against Jock Crimson to fight over. Well, I haven't. He hasn't done anything to me. He's acting perfectly natural—just exactly like I'd act in his place. Use your head, man. If Allie Snow takes to his kind more 'n she takes to mine, why, is that any fault of hers or his or mine? Say—say? Do you think I'm a baby to kick the table just because I can't have the cake? Say, tell me."

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I ended with a rush, almost choked with the torrent of my words, my hands gripping the lapels of his coat. His arms flopped down to his sides, as if all the strength had left his shoulder muscles.

"Zhoe," he muttered, hopeless and bewildered—"Zhoe, you're kind o' meexed up t'-night. You ain't zhust Zhoe—a'right."

"I'm a lot righter than you are," I retorted. I had given him time, however, to get hold of himself.

"Zhoe," he said, very slowly, "I never theenk eet come t' thees. You been better t' me 'n a son could 'a' been, but I got t' say eet t'-night. I theenk you scared you get hurt. An'—an'—he ain't 's big a man 's you are, too."

A confusion of words tumbled to my lips, but I stopped them before they sounded. I was beaten down by the sudden wonder whether after all Dedos had not spoken the truth. My fear for my face and my eyes, in the black room at the apple-green house, came back to confront me. I had never before stood up to face this question, grown of a sudden so imperative.

"I'm not scared of him or any other man alive," I muttered, but I was still tangled with the question.

"Den you're goeen' up dere an' fight," Dedos commanded.

And still I did not know. I sparred him off, blind and sullen. "I've got nothing to fight about."

"I'm goeen' count ten on you." He stepped down a little and crouched down upon himself. He must have recognized that the supreme task of his life was in front of him.

"One," he whispered.

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I had a sweeping desire to scream with laughter. This abrupt drop from tensity to absurdity was a piece taken out bodily from a burlesque performance. I looked about me and saw that the men had drawn in and were staring at the two of us with wide eyes that showed white in the filtering light from the shore.

"Two."

I remembered now how the man before me used to laugh when he had seen a small boy balk at going to bed, quail at a counted "six," and start for the garret stairs with a sullen celerity at "eight." I remembered how he had popped his fingers and roared at the spectacle.

"Five." Dedos had come so far while I was back at the little house, smiling at myself. I straightened my back and looked about once more. The men seemed to have drawn in closer. The flock of a white eye here and there lent a curiously sinister air to the rank of familiar faces. I turned back to Dedos. All I could see was a strange black bundle, immobile.

Of a sudden I wondered what he—what they—had in mind to do to me if I should wait to hear the count of "ten"—what inconceivable plan of violence they could have stumbled upon. Once again the dark bundle in front of me gave voice.

"Six."

But I had lost myself between "five" and "six," just as the boy in the little house had always done. Why a man of my size and years should have thrown back to his childhood days at a succession of uttered numerals is beyond me, just as the

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seeing of ghosts by sane people is not to be accounted for. I felt the cadence rushing on inexorably toward a "seven" of some obscure and awful portent. It came.

"Seven."

Dedos had whispered before. Now his utterance choked my ears with its clamoring roll, its echoes stirred the crannies of all the water-front and jerked me forward on my toes. It was only later I realized that the bell in Town Hall was striking its first notes of eleven.

I stumbled forward and clutched Dedos's shoulder. "Don't be a damn fool," I gasped at him. "My God, d'you think I'm a baby to scare with that?"

I saw his lips forming for "eight." The bell clanged its second pair of notes from the eastward and I was sure he had counted.

"Come on along," I cried, "and in the devil's name, keep quiet."

He would have fallen backward when he tried to get up had it not been for my hand on his collar. After all, that counting had cost him more than it had me.

I had almost forgotten what it was I was to do, but I rushed about it with the impetus of a stampede. I struck one stack of lumber with my shoulder; it groaned crazily and fell away in the dark without fetching me up for a breath. Behind my back I heard the racket of my men among the boards and the hollow boom of their feet as they came through the passageway in my wake.

XXI

TIM

A CROWD was gathered about the mouth of the Glen. There must have been something awesome about my appearance, for the Black Caps cut apart to let me through like a school of bait before a vessel's stem. And yet I was not done with them, for the whole length of the lane was dotted with little crowds of them that deployed along the fence as I passed. I looked back over my shoulder. My men had closed up on my heels in a compact, dark knot, with a sharp watch to the flanks.

A flare of a match to my right attracted my eyes. A man's face came into abrupt light and shadow behind his cupped hands which sheltered a cigarette. The point of peculiarity was that I knew this face very well. It belonged to Jim Sanos of the *Mary Myers*, and a neighbor of my own street. As I watched him, wondering, I saw his left eye close meaningly, followed by a slight nod that extinguished the match. Over my shoulder I perceived him withdraw from the crowd, hurdle the fence, and run off between two houses to the east. No less than five matches flared out before the faces of men I knew as I passed up the Glen. Two of them were skippers, the other three spare

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hands of crews, and all of them, following their covert demonstrations, began to extricate themselves from the lines of steamer-men.

I had an oppressive sense of forces closing in. That strange mob silence which had marked the whole night had held during our advance up the Glen, broken only now and then by the hiss of whispering among the throng. Only once, as I rounded into the flare of the Glen Court lamp, did a man laugh aloud, and he was cut off short by a neighbor's thumb in his ribs.

I came into the end of that blind alley which was so much like the narrow hall of a theater, and there I halted, brought to a stand by the tableau grouped in the center of the stage. The Court lamp illuminated the porch of the Ide girls' house; but its light, flat and diffused, was not enough for the final triumphant spectacle of the Ide girls' night. I knew their handiwork in the two lanterns that flared and smoked on either side of the steps.

Behind these improvised footlights the Ide girls shifted about nervously on their thin legs, but with more than ever of that dramatic formality which I had marked in the kitchen. It seemed that every lift of an arm or jab at a straying wisp of hair moved the romantic adventure forward by an appointed step. I observed these things because for the moment two of them screened the central figure of the group from the angle where I stood. Their backs were toward me, but when one of the others pointed an agitated finger at me across their shoulders they wheeled about, and in wheeling stepped apart.

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Allie Snow stood there looking down across the little pool of light at me. She was dressed for going away, with a long cloak that fell below her knees and the tight bonnet which had pleased me so much. A veil was pinned over this, swathing the hair, but she had lifted it away from her face, as I could have known she would—Allie Snow would never have gone out of Old Harbor with her face covered. If this woman who had been mine was happy, then let never a mother pray happiness for her child. I had never believed that any one could be so changed in a space of mere hours—and I had seen her no more than forty minutes back. But now the lanterns below threw crescents of shadow in cheeks that were as white as the broad shells the children pick up beyond High Head. The greatest change was in the eyes. They had been narrowed when I saw her before, save for that one exquisite moment when hope was tearing her. Now they were unnaturally large and brilliant and dry.

When she saw me first and knew who I was, her hands went up to her throat, and, touching there, seemed to strike spark to a flame that licked hungrily at her cheeks for an instant. She fell back ever so short a step; then she came forward to the edge of the floor and faced me fairly. I have never known just what passed between us while we stood there looking into each other's eyes—whether it was a fight between our two strengths or a sweeter battle for understanding. I only know that after a time she did a marvelous thing—she smiled at me so bravely and steadily that my heart was stabbed with the agony it must have cost her. I

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have always treasured the memory of that one smile, because it was the most utterly valiant thing I ever knew.

She could not be brave the next moment. She had heard a sound inside of the door behind that set her fingers plucking at the cloak and her face half turned to meet it. From where I stood I could hear nothing of it, but now I remembered mistily having seen some one running up the steps to disappear inside. That had been a messenger of alarm.

Now suddenly I saw the great Jock Crimson silhouetted in the open doorway. I have measured that doorway since because I could not believe that a man's shoulders could have spanned its width. He hesitated there but an instant, turning his blocky head with its flaming halo from side to side. Then he stepped out across the porch shiftily, with his feet far apart, as if he wished to be ready for a spring in either direction. It was apparent that the alarm had been lacking in detail. When he came as far as Allie he pushed her aside with an open hand and stood blinking out into the open court, his knees bent slightly, his elbows hitching the coat-sleeves over the wrists, his chin down to hide his neck. The man would have stood there if all the court and the street beyond had been choked with men to kill him.

First he stared at me and nodded, as if to himself. Then he scrutinized the rank of schooner-men flanking me, and nodded again. It was not until his eyes had come to the fringe of black caps along the walls and followed them back to the solid

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massing in the mouth of the court that he straightened up and stood at ease. He threw back his head and bit at the air, flung out his arms and roared at me.

"Well, cap'n, what do yoo say?"

I had never seen him out of his humor. And this was the man they had brought me here to fight. I knew now that I hated him supremely; yes, even more than I admired him; but still I could see nothing more than the resort of a cowed bully in banging fists with the favored one.

So I stood and gawked at him, having nothing in my mind to say. Dedos breathed hard behind my left shoulder. A sense of vast upheaval smoldering in train was all about me in the pent space. If it touched Crimson, then he did not show it. He threw me off with a snap of his fingers, turned his back, and took Allie by the shoulders to look at her.

"Well, little woman," he laughed, "arre we ready t' get under way?"

She nodded at him and winced a shade under the boisterous pressure of his hand. He let her go with another laugh and a soft buffet on the cheek, and stooped down to pick up the satchel he had brought from the house and dropped when he had faced the crowd.

And now the time had come for the blow, whatever it should be, to fall: the stage was set and the players posted for the final act of the drama. Every one within sight of that grouping in Glen Court was aware of it, and the news had whispered down through the waiting hundreds in the darkness of Glen Street.

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Crimson turned and came to the edge of the porch, with Allie behind him suffering the measured affection of the Ide girls. He paused for a moment there, weighing and balancing the temper of the crowd before him. He would have to come through me and the crew of the *Arbitrator*. But was I of a mind to stand up to him; and if so, how promptly could his friends, massed solidly on our flanks and rear, drive through and smother trouble? For he had no appetite for trouble with the girl at his heels. Once through, and with her ahead, he would turn and serve me with joy.

He had passed it over and decided in the time it took to change the satchel from one hand to the other. Any one who knew Jock Crimson, the romanticist, the passionate lover of the great gesture, would have understood that he could never have decided any other way.

So he would not leave the satchel for one of his men to carry; he would walk out with one hand only free. No, he would make the gesture more superlative, more stunning. He turned and took a smaller grip from Allie's hand. I stood half a head above his height, but he would walk through me with both hands full.

As he turned to come down he opened his mouth and roared again. He could no more help roaring than a whale can help blowing. Dedos struck me hard between the shoulder-blades.

"W'en he come along, bang heem in a face," he muttered in my ear.

God knows my hands were curving with the lust to tear him, but something within me kept scream-

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ing desperately: "He's won her; he's won her, man, fair and open. Hit him, pound him, kill him, but you're beaten fair."

I was rocked between the two till my eyes misted and I saw him distorted and gigantic. I wondered vaguely why he was so long in coming down. Dedos's fierce injunction droned monotonously in my ear: I was aware of my fellows' shoulders pressing about me with a hardly perceptible motion.

I saw the man, midway of the steps, drop the smaller grip and bend down to handle something which leaped up on his leg. Now I remembered that I had seen nothing of my dog since I passed through the crush in the square. He had lost me then and he had been trailing me ever since, so far as I have been able to find out. Agnes says he dashed into the kitchen at home, panting hard, and rushed out again when he found her alone.

At any rate, he was there: Tim, the friend of all men, and utterly without doubt or guile, in the perfection of his faith quite sure that this extraordinary must be a kind of festival, and tottering on his lumpy hind legs with his ready echo of the general joy. He had not marked me in the ruck.

Crimson must have been struck with the consummate irony of my dog's prancing there at his knee to be petted, and understood in a flash how it fitted into his great gesture. He let the satchel drop, tucked a thumb under Tim's collar, and waved his free hand at me.

"See—see," he commanded. "Look; look—fetch

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'em." And when the dog's eyes had picked me out and he had jumped into his collar to break away to me, the man stroked his broad, yellow head and laughed aloud over the thing he had in mind to say.

"Go on, dahg—go on back to yoor master an' tell 'im Jock Crimson's allus wullin' to divide even."

If he could have been content with that, it might be that this book would never have been written. But the man was drunk with the splendor of his triumph, and the swollen tide of his blood clamored for the last exquisite touch.

He loosed Tim's head and, lifting his boot sharply, kicked him down the steps toward me.

The dog came down sprawling on the gravel. He was up on his feet in a flash, but instead of running to me he turned and faced the steps. That was the first time, so far as I know, that he had ever been kicked, and it required a certain space of time for his huge blunt head to make out just what had happened. You see, he had to create a new emotion out of nothing. But when it came to life it was full-grown and devouring and terrible.

I could see only his broad back, but that was enough to come back to me time and again in dreams of horror. He went up the steps so slowly, dragging his hind legs stiffly across the wood, ominous, blind, silent, inexorable. I was cold all over. Dedos was swearing terribly under his breath behind me, although he never could recollect it afterward when I spoke of it.

The man on the steps had taken up his luggage, but now he put the two pieces down again without

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taking his eyes from the animal. The look in his face showed that his madness had not made him so blind that he should mistake this thing. His final flourish had miscarried, but he was not yet fool enough to try and laugh it away, as he would have disposed of another blunder. And it was just because he could not laugh at it that he grew angry—consuming hot fury to match the cold fury of the beast that came toward him.

It seemed an age that the dog's claws scraped across the steps. When he had come up with his front feet on the step below Crimson, the man bent quickly, all the overwhelming passion of him in the motion, drew back his heavy boot, and launched it out with the whole power of his leg, landing squarely on the white diamond under my dog's throat.

Oh, I shall never forget that so long as I keep my mind! Forever I shall have with me the arc of that limp thing wheeling toward me, and the echo of a soft thud, and the sickness that laid hold of me. The dog's eyes opened and closed with the same motion of the lids, but they had found me. One of his fore legs twitched toward me. After that his head rolled over gently on the gravel.

Then the light went out of my reason, and there came to take its place a murky dusk through which a world of black figures leaped and writhed. Only one thing I knew—that there was some one or something a great ways off through the red twilight in front of me that I must take in my hands and tear apart.

And so I set out to go there. At first I could

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advance without the least bother. And then those writhing black figures began to clutter about my knees and trouble me with their cries and pluck at me. So I beat them down with something that I held in my hand, and stumbled on and on toward this man whom I must kill. By and by a wave of black creatures rose up before me and carried me down. All this happened, I suppose, in the passing of a second.

For a second I was stunned. Then the red light filtered back to my brain, but it was clearer now. I felt that I must get up from there, and I got up—I was crazy with strength. I can recall dimly the tearing of flesh in my hands, and once the soft crunching of a bone that I held. I set myself for a twist, and flung my arms about in a full arc, emptying a six-foot circle. I looked once more toward the porch. Crimson was no longer there, nor Allie.

More men came at me. I swung them away mechanically while I craned my neck to look out over the mob. No matter what happened, I must know where my quarry had gone. Ten feet away Dedos debouched from a knot of steamer-men, head last, his stocky arms whirling about it like a towboat's screw. Immediately he was swallowed up by another charge. Beyond the spot where he had been visible for that evanescent glimpse there was a small and ragged pool of straining, yelling, and gesticulating figures, and every fourth man in that havoc was mine, if the tales they tell in Old Harbor have anything of truth.

There was nothing in that quarter to hold my

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eye. I was looking for the spot of a white bonnet and a brush of red hair near it. Farther over, where the crowd was packed in the mouth of the court, black and dense and quiet, was where I picked them up. They moved away from me, leaving a wake of slowly closing men behind. There was never a man whose voice would have carried fifteen yards in that hell of fighting, but I shouted with all my lungs after them, cursing and pleading with Jock Crimson to turn and stand up to me.

Even my muddled wits told me that I would gain nothing by standing there and bawling into bedlam. If I wanted Crimson I must go and get him. Having found the thing to do I set about it. A man told me afterward that the back of my head was gashed and the blood from it running down inside my shirt collar. I knew nothing of this. My lungs filled and emptied easily, my muscles worked as though they had been bathed in warm oil.

I was beginning to roar like Jock Crimson. A man in a black cap rose up in front of me and ran at my shoulders. My fist drove at his head. When he flew away I roared.

I began to move forward, one step at a time, but before long I was going faster: before I was done with it I was moving almost at a run. It is hard to explain this phenomenon. It would seem to outrage all the laws and balances of nature that one man may put a hundred to rout, and yet it has been done upon more than one momentous occasion. When one man is possessed of the strength of twenty, I doubt not it is partly because the twenty are possessed of the strength of one;

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and when the lone hero has knocked the wits out of one assailant he has knocked the hearts out of five.

There must be something of this kind to explain why, by the time I had won the mouth of the court, a ragged lane began to open before me, banked with scores of men who held up their open hands and watched my monstrous and blundering passage out of rounded eyes.

Perhaps fifty yards ahead of me showed the spot of a lantern's light, tormented by the silhouette of bobbing heads and shoulders. It must be there that I would find my man. I wondered how long it would be before he would turn and stand, knowing, as he did, that he could send Allie on with his men to the steamer. He was aware now that I was coming, for the awed rumor of it had run across the throng ahead. I was drawing up so rapidly upon the glow of light now that I knew he had stopped.

They had formed a hollow triangle in the packed lane, about half-way to the front street, the apex toward the shore. Thus, when the thick of the crowd fell away from me I found myself blundering into the space on the broad side, with Crimson facing me from the apex. The lantern-bearer stood behind him, throwing his front in deep shadow, but he ordered the man away to a fairer position. That was the sort of man I had for an enemy.

It is curious how completely he and I had changed positions. Now it was he who seemed collected, while I was swinging my arms and roaring. I roared at him when I stepped into the open.

"Crimson, I'm going to kill you."

XXII

A PASSAGE OF THE FRONT STREET

HE had stripped off his coat and shirt. His undershirt was red, and with the fire of his beard and face and hair he made a most marvelous spectacle in the precarious illumination of the lantern which was never still for an instant. He rubbed his fists over the muscles of his huge chest and smiled at my turbulence.

"So yoo're goin' t' kill me?" he said. "Would yoo be wantin' t' shake hands like they do in Corn'll afore yoo do it?" He had his palm spread out as he finished.

"No, you red-headed —," I bellowed, with tears in my eyes. "I wouldn't touch your dirty hand if I was to burn in hell. Come on—come—" I was dancing with impatience to be at the business. A hand clapped on my back sent me jumping a yard in a panic of nerves. I wheeled half about and saw that it was Dedos. One side of his face was shining with his own blood.

"You carryeen' too mush sail, Zhoe," he cautioned me. "Tek a reef."

I was furious with the good fellow for holding me up, turned my back upon him without a word,

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and squared away in the center of the triangle, crying again to Crimson to come on.

We were pretty evenly matched. There was not the difference of ten pounds in our weights, although I was the taller. Youth was on my side; the wisdom and cunning of a hundred battles on his. I could not understand why he continued to hold back. It was hard to believe that he was afraid to fight, but I taunted him with it.

"Step up, you skulking bastard, you."

He never heard it. After all my pains to have it done the time was not yet come to settle with Jock Crimson. He had half turned away from me and was listening to the whispering of a man who had fought in through the crowd. Now I marked for the first time that the silence which had come down over our preparations was no longer a silence. A confused rattle of shouts swept over us from the direction of the front street: it grew to a monstrous din. All about me I heard men whispering the news that the message-bearer had brought to Crimson. There was fighting at the mouth of the Glen. I could not think what it could mean. It must be that the steamer-men had fallen to fighting among themselves, and yet would so paltry a thing as that turn Jock Crimson away from the finest battle of his life?

Then, without apparent reason, my mind harked back to the five men who had lit cigarettes and hurried away while I was stalking up the Glen. Dedos had told me twice that the town was up, but the idea had never taken any hold.

In the blackness above us a blind slammed back,

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and a woman's voice sounded, disembodied and screaming. "Dedos—Dedos," it cried. "It's th' Santos and Mabel Lee."

Dedos, beside me, looked up toward the invisible window and shouted a question: "W'eech way?"

"From th' west'rd."

"Den d' *Diadem* an' *Success* 's weeth 'em," he muttered. He took hold of my elbow.

"Dat's more 'n a hundred men. Dey'll try close up d' end o' d' street beefore her an' heem gets out—see? Dey driveen' 'em een f'm d' west'rd. Zhoe, you an' me goeen' see one fight now."

I was staring at the spot where Crimson had been. It was empty, and through the shifting crowd I caught a glimpse of his red undershirt rushing away. I started after him in blind and unreasoning fury, but Dedos dragged on my arm.

"Plenty time now," he soothed me; "I t'eenk dey shut 'em back sure. We stay here."

"Stay here *nothing!*" I bawled, and battered him off.

When I had broken a lane before, I had done it against men's faces; now I had to work with their backs, for every one had turned toward the shore and the tumult of fighting. It had been easier the other way, with all the blows I swallowed, for now they clogged my way with their passive weight. I was forced to batter out a path by sheer strength, swinging my arms like flails and hoisting my legs over the men that fell. And so I waded down Glen Street, wild with the desire to catch my man, but wary enough to watch that I did not pass him by in the ruck.

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I found myself roaring again, and cursing these blank and idle backs I had to pummel, and I hit them harder than I needed, so that some of the tangle through which I dragged my legs lay quiet as deadwood. I thirsted for faces, and before I was aware of it I was given faces in plenty. A tempest of human fury burst about me, as sudden as one of those storms that break in the Indies and flick every stitch away in the wink of an eye. All about were men beating at one another, or locked chest to chest and wrestling with their backs, shouting, biting, tearing. I was unutterably glad to be at it again. I put my head down between my shoulders and drove ahead.

Some one's fist caught the point of my chin and set my head ringing. I raised up, with I know not how many men sliding off my back and shoulders, and grabbed at the first neck I saw. The feel of it was good in my hands. I bellowed and bent it farther and farther back. Then when I took the trouble to look at the face that went with the neck my brain was reeling again. I was hard at work choking the captain of the *Diadem*, sister ship of the *Arbitrator*.

I had him up straight away, with his head rolling on my shoulder and his mouth sucking wind. Half of the men about me were known to me by name. They were banked as tight as bait-fish in a can, all watching the fringe of fighting behind me in the line of skirmish I had come through blind. Here and there one clapped his neighbor on the shoulder and pointed to me with gestures of delight and astonishment.

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And now I looked about me. We were standing at the mouth of the Glen. The nearer fighting was not so loud now, only to the right, at the down-street angle of the opening, it continued to rage, for a thin line of steamer-men still poured out of the Glen crowd around that corner and into the front street, where they seeped away toward the eastward. It was not long before this leak was dried up and Glen Street was closed from the shore end.

"Where's Crimson?" I shouted.

The men nearest to me looked at one another in awkward silence, each waiting for another to answer. It was evident that they knew nothing. One of them stuck a thumb up the Glen and said in Portuguese that they were keeping everybody up there.

Oh, the consummate blockheads! They had shut the cage, but not until the bird was gone and, for all I knew, half-way to Long Wharf by this time. I stretched up on my toes, rearing a good foot above the heads around, and waved my arms, gesticulating to the eastward.

"Down-street!" I implored them. My voice sounded high and shrill. "Everybody down-street!" I bellowed again, and fought my way in that direction, with my shoulders against the crowd. I think I managed to start that mob as much with my back and legs as with my voice; at any rate, the men in front of me began to shove along, shunting their neighbors forward by gentle degrees till before it would have seemed possible the whole mass was in motion without knowing why. Twenty yards and we were on the run, filling the narrow

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cañon with the thunderous beat of our passage and rattling the windows with a riot of wordless voices, sweeping the street from wall to wall. I have never been much of a runner, being set up too solid for much speed, but I worked to the head of the column by dragging at my fellows. I wanted to be up with Crimson and his charge before the tremendous weight of the stampede struck them.

The street ahead was filled with a scattering of figures pelting away beneath the string of lamps. We rumbled through the narrows at the baker's shop, jammed in so tight, shoulder to shoulder and chest to back, that more than one man went down with his breath knocked out, and let the drive go over him. Above our tumult as we passed Town Hall I could hear the bell clanging in the tower. Davie Means had broken in the tower door ten minutes before. Later in the night they dragged him forth, so done that he could not lift his hands.

We had come within a hundred and fifty yards of the square, and still no sign of Crimson. The street before us was black with running men, and beyond them I thought I could see where their fellows turned to stand in a wall across the street abreast of Danzio's store. If that were true, then their leader could not be far away. But even at that he could make the wharf and his vessel for all of us.

If we in the front rank had had any other wish than to collide with that living wall we could no more have helped ourselves than a moth can fight a tempest. Our fellows were hurling us on in a solid drive, and behind them came another drive

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of the steamer-men from the Glen, so that we were the meat in a sandwich, with one of the slices thicker than we knew at the moment.

I, for one, had no other wish. My head sung with the clatter of our rush, and I put it down level with my shoulders and went into them, howling with that strange lust for fighting that had entered my spirit. Their line must have gone back ten feet at the impact. For a moment I was clear off my feet, with a queer sensation of flight through a cloud of solid bodies. On I went, working my arms and legs like fins in the dark, and not at all bothered by the stray fists and boots that found me. I was so blind about my work that I found myself sprawling on hands and knees in the almost empty square before I had fairly commenced.

I was dazed for a moment, because I had imagined the place as full of Crimson's men. Instead of that he had left a guard in his rear that I had tumbled straight through, and he himself was half-way out along the wharf, where I heard the rumble of many boots in the darkness.

But the square was not so empty as I had thought at first. I had a vision of many men coming in at a run from the mouth of the front street to the eastward. Those in the lead yelled over their shoulders to those who followed and waved their hands at the fighting behind me, whose racket filled all the neighboring lanes.

I had lost one army, and now I had found another and a larger one. The man who came in the lead was Fred Pigeon, skipper of the *Unicorn*, and be-

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hind him ran Johnnie Swift, of the *Annie Swift*, and his spare hand, Man'el Jason, side by side. And there in the pack I marked my own father, puffing and bellowing with fight. Where they had come from, or how many vessels there were of them, I could not know, and I did not wait to find out. I was on my feet and running to meet them, one hand held high and the other pointing out along the wharf.

"There," I screamed at them, "out there! Don't bother here."

When I saw that some of them understood I loitered no longer, but turned and pounded out along the wharf. I had not made ten steps when my ears caught the sudden thunder of their boots upon the hollow planking behind me. They drew up with me, and the first rank of us blundered along abreast, with the glow of the steamers waxing on our fronts. Now that I had them in line with the steamers, I could see our quarry in silhouette against them, black and tossing, almost out to the end. The whistles were blaring from the steamers that their steam was ready.

The man running next me on my right, a short, lean dory-hand from Lisbon, carried a rifle, sticking out awkwardly in front of his belt. At every other step his finger went down to play at the trigger. I reached over and flipped it out of his hands so violently that it sailed over the edge of the wharf. He had no idea where it had gone and ran on, staring down at his empty hands in ludicrous wonder. There were two people in that crowd ahead whom I would not have had

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harméd for anything in the world. They told me afterward that seven men were crowded off the wharf in the course of that journey and swam back to shore to pelt along again for a sight of the finish. One of them was Gabriel Deutra, Dedos's nephew. He has a scar on his forearm to this day where a spike gashed him when he fell.

The end of Long Wharf opens out in a square, about twice the width of the main causeway. To the right or western side of this platform stands a shed of considerable size, where Seth White used to carry on his trading in fish. The outer side of the building runs down flush with the wharf, so that fish-baskets may be hoisted straight up to the door. The shed is on the shoreward quarter of the square, leaving the seaward half open and bare.

I place this shed so exactly because my mind was busy with it as we bore down the last quarter of the wharf's four hundred yards. Every succeeding moment the monstrous booming behind mounted in volume till it seemed to thunder against the sky. The guard that Crimson had left for me to stumble over would have split by now, loosing that horde in the front street upon our heels, schooner-men and steamer-men, all in a pounding, tearing, tripping race for the end of the wharf. It would be nothing less than a miracle if the hinder half of this mad worm of men should consent to stop and lie quiet, for the mere reason that the head of it had come to the end of the path.

That is why I was thinking about Seth White's building and working gradually toward the western

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edge of the runway. I had only myself to think of this night; it did not matter if a score of my mates went over the end, but my own person had taken on an importance to me that it had never had before. I was the one individual in all that throng who could afford no mischance now. The time was near, very near, when Jock Crimson would stand up to me. I had almost forgotten why I was to fight, but I needed no other reason but the parched thirst of my palms.

The illumination of the city of steamers burst over us like a fire-bomb. The corner of the fish-house came up to me, my shoulder tore along its shingles, jolted past a door-frame, splintered a little window, and as the farther end of the building went by I bore sharply to the right and stood in the lee.

It happened as I had calculated. Those on the inner flank of the column broke away by twos and threes into the narrow open space, but not rapidly to ease the pressure on the outside. I saw a man's arms go up over the floor of heads and fall away as he leaped. There came a sound of boot-soles grinding on wood and yells and imprecations screaming back over the column that rolled on inexorably. More arms were going up about the outer edges. Here and there a man's face, drawn and livid, strained over the pack.

"Lie down!" I shouted. *"Lie down, you fools—fall down!"*

It is doubtful whether they could have done it even had they heard me, they were packed so close. Before they had banked up far enough in

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the rear to hold the weight of the mob, nineteen men had gone over the edge. Three of them never came back. Of these I knew one well—a half-grown lad by the name of Peter Swift, who should never have been there at all.

Now I could turn and look at the steamers. They lay in two lines—one straight out from the end of the wharf, made up of eleven vessels lashed side to side, the nearest with its wharf-lines loosened and a strip of dark water separating it from the dock. The other line ran from the right side of the wharf, at right angles to the first, stretching to the westward, thirteen boats, with the *Bangor*, Crimson's boat, swinging two fathoms clear of the piling.

I had seen that same spectacle of floating thoroughfares a score of times, I suppose, but it had never appeared to me so strangely like the veritable streets of a city as now. Always before it had been deserted with the men ashore. As it was, the great bulk of their population was cut off toward shore by the double stops of the two forces at my back, but with the fraction which had come aboard with Crimson passing up and down the long vistas of hanging lanterns and the doors and ports of deck-houses they illuminated, seen over the crowded square in the foreground, gave it an indescribable air of populousness and the glittering movement that belongs to city nights.

I opened a way to the edge of the wharf, abreast of the *Bangor*. A dozen men stood in her waist eying us curiously.

"Where's the skipper?" I called to them,

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They nodded sullenly toward the upper deck of the forward house, where were the wheel-room and the state-rooms. I had another question ready, but it was answered, before it was uttered, by Crimson himself.

He came out of the door of the after state-room and slammed it shut, holding it so with his heel. He leaned down a little, with his hands on the rail, and looked out over all the crowd, covering it slowly, section by section, till he came to me last. A lantern hung directly below him. Its perpendicular rays, striking up under his beard, gave him an expression of peculiar ferocity and goriness.

"I see yoo hov brought yoor gang, Manta," he said.

"They'll not touch you for one," I gave him back.

"Do yoo want t' coom aboard?" he asked. We were both speaking very evenly.

"You come ashore," I said. "The footing's better, and you have my word that nobody here but me will lay a finger on your carcass."

He turned his head and looked up the lane of the steamers, seeming to speculate.

"Wull yoo pass thot same word o' yooors thot if I haul oop t' the dock there won't be hand or foot o' yoor crowd laid on ut?"

I looked about me. A great many of the men were old shipmates of mine. I knew every one within twenty feet of me by sight. Two captains of vessels nodded to me.

"Not hand or foot," I called back.

He shouted fore and aft to have the lines fetched

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in, while I cleared a ten-foot space upon the boards, rushing the crowd with my shoulders till they lifted up their hands and cried that they could go no farther. My voice had been steady when I talked with Crimson, but my hands were fluttering now like dry leaves. A wave of weakness went over me. I was so pale for an instant that the men near me whispered and wondered.

But if they imagined that I was beginning to be afraid of Jock Crimson they were very far from the truth. I do not know why that faintness laid hold of me, but I do know that I was as sure that I should do what I wanted with Crimson as I was that the wharf was beneath me.

XXIII

"A PAIR WUTH TH' FISTIES"

HE came to the side of his craft, crawled over the rail, deliberately hoisting his body on arms as thick at the biceps as a common man's thigh, the muscles playing smoothly under the flaming skin. He stood up to face me, his fists on his hips.

"Well, ut hod t' coom afore we was through ut—eh, Manta?" he said.

"Yes," I answered, impatiently, for I was tickling to be at him.

"One of your friends got a watch?" he queried.

"This is none of your dude fights," I cried, disgusted with his deliberation.

"Yoo don't want it reg'lar, then?"

It occurred to me that he was laughing at me. I started toward him, swinging my hands like any school-child.

"To hell with you and your talk," I bellowed, and rushed him with my head down.

And here the man might have cleared his hands of the fight and of me without further pains simply by stepping aside and allowing me to gallop with my eyes closed right over the rail of his boat, and ten chances to one down the open hatch, a

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good drop into a three-foot layer of stinking fish. But Jock Crimson would have cut off his right hand before he would have done that, the more now he saw how lusty and heavy-witted I was about the game.

So he brought me up with a blow on my chin that seemed to whirl the wharf from under my feet and whirl it back again at the flat of my shoulders, with a million threads of flame streaming across my eyeballs.

When these had cleared away I found myself staring up at a row of inverted faces, most of them with mouths open at strange angles. My face throbbed with shooting spasms, my tongue licked at lips that did not seem to be mine. He had floored me as neatly as a boy might knock down a sunflower stalk.

He was laughing at me now frankly. I got myself to my knees a little shakily and stared at him, while he rocked his great trunk back and forth and wheezed at the sight.

"Yoo need somebody t' show yoo home?" he rumbled, bending over, with his red brush sticking out at me.

"Not yet," I said.

I got up and looked about. There was not so much as the shuffle of a boot-sole in the whole wide throng. They stared at us, fascinated, and without much hope for me, I think. My eyes shifted to Crimson's vessel over his shoulder. The door of the state-room on the upper deck of the house was swung back. In the black frame of the aperture the girl I loved was standing, supporting herself

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with one hand on the frame while she pressed the other against her cheek. She was so still and white that one might have thought her stone there, had it not been for her eyes, that seemed forever growing wider and deeper in color. I wondered why she looked so long at me, and never at Crimson.

There had once been a time when I had not wondered at her gazing in my face. I remembered that now with a wave of unutterable bitterness. I looked from her to the red man in front of me, and in that moment I was done forever with my old weighing and balancing. This man had stolen her, and I was the animal man fighting for the female of his kind. Perhaps a tenth of a minute had passed; Allie Snow had stood there in the black doorway looking at me; and shame as it may be, I had forgotten there ever was a dog by the name of Tim.

"Arre yoo comin' again?" asked Crimson, rocking on his toes. There was a strange note of sadness in my voice when I answered him.

"Oh yes, I'm coming."

I knew nothing but to charge at him as I had done before, though he had taken pains to teach me better. He drew back a step and cut at me in the same deft way, but it would have taken more than the force he could put behind it to stop the man he was standing up with now. The sheer weight of me carried me on, though my head cracked back on my neck and the dance of the fire-threads whirled around me. I stumbled forward and fell against his chest, my arms slipped about his middle, and I lay there with my face in his neck crying for

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light, while his hand fumbled to get beneath my throat.

After what seemed a long, long time I began to wonder why the breath rasped so in the throat that lay beside my ear. Then for the first time I became aware that my arms ached with a terrible strain.

It seems that I was crushing his ribs in without an idea of what I was about. He clawed desperately at my throat with his fingers. His breath came and went in frightful gasps against my cheek; he cursed me with a horrible oath and bit through the lobe of my ear.

Had I known the game I would have clung there with my chin buried in the hollow above his collar-bone till he went limp and dropped down beneath me. As it was, I must raise my head a little to see his face. And then his forearm was under my chin in a flash, the hand gripping the biceps of the other arm, whose elbow crooked at the base of my skull. He had been working in desperation for that hold, racing with the waning of his strength, and I had made him a gift of it. Now, strain horribly as I might, my chin went back and back slowly till my eyeballs seemed to be on fire in their sockets. Crimson was in agony too, the veins running swollen over the puffy, purple stain of his face, but he managed to leer at me and whisper in gasping periods:

"Now you—sucker—I'll—break your—damn—neck."

Curious ringings and buzzings began to fill my brain. My eyes felt glazed, and out of them I saw

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Crimson's face wavering crazily, twice its natural size, distorted into a hundred shapes of malignance. I knew that my hands were loosening at his back, for all I could do. I let go and reached back to pull away his arms, but they were locked and my strength was nearly gone. I brought up my right hand; I pounded at his nose till his whole face was red from the blood of it; I felt of it and crunched it in splinters under my fist. Tears streamed down his cheeks, but no other sign did he make that he felt it. All of him was in his two arms. We swayed there for an endless time, two huge, bloody animals, and all the thronged wharf and the floating streets coming together there watched and strangled with us and did not move. Crimson's eyes were as glazed as mine with the awful tension of his arms. He tried and tried; with all the strength that was in him he tried to break my neck, and he could not break my neck. As I had never known why I had lifted the stone in the hollow behind Cold Storage fields, so I had never guessed what the fruit of it would be.

No arms fashioned out of flesh and bone could close that fearful clamp forever. Crimson's mouth opened, a horrible slit in a ground of red, and out of it tumbled the most inane and senseless mutterings.

The pressure over my throat eased away by spasmodic degrees till the arm at last slipped down and lay upon my chest. Our heads dropped nearer to one another.

So we stood there staring dully into each other's eyes. Centuries upon centuries of humanity had

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scaled away from us in that passage of minutes, leaving nothing in us but life.

After a little we began fighting again. I think that must have been the strangest battle of a hundred years. I had a wavering sort of notion that it would be a fine thing if I could get my fingers into his eyes. When I clawed at them some whimsical terror set him blubbering. He turned and ran away into the crowd, twisting like a frightened rabbit, and I waded after him through the mess of men who fell under my arms. When I caught him by the belt he turned upon me with such ferocity that I was carried back three yards before I tripped and brought the two of us down in the gloom of a forest of legs. Here we rolled about, mouthing and tearing at each other, blind and utterly without reason. His knees slipped in between mine. I clamped them shut and began to turn over, using my arms as levers. By and by I heard his scream and felt the bones bend and snap and buckle up.

Then I went madder than ever. I scrambled to my feet, bent over, took him around the waist, lifted him straight up over my head. I yelled to the crowd to open a passage. I stumbled along it to the western edge of the dock and hurled the great Jock Crimson clear over the rail of his own boat and fairly to the edge of the yawning hatchway.

You must remember that I was quite mad. I have to think of that when I wake sometimes from a dream of Crimson lying there twisted on the deck, with his broken legs dangling away into the darkness of the hold.

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I stood in the flare of a hundred lanterns and stretched my battered arms high and wide apart, open-handed. All the devils of hell romped through my brain. I looked at Allie Snow, who had sunk down on her knees behind the railing, clutching the bar above her head, and I shouted at her:

“Now—by—God, you can take your red devil—what I’ve left of him.”

Then I turned away, suddenly sick with the sickness that follows drunkenness and unutterably weary to be away home.

XXIV

A MATTER OF GEOGRAPHY

BUT now there was other business afoot, and my road home was destined to be a very long one and full of turnings. Two hundred men had seen Jock Crimson's blood, and four hundred men were hearing of it now, not in shouts thrown back along the column as other news had gone, but scarcely audible, like a slow wave on some subterranean sea. In the fore part of the night a great many of our men had run and fought with their vessels, with only a half idea of what they were about or why they were about it, like my fellow at the foot of the Glen who had pointed up the street with his thumb and mumbled. The spectacle of the monstrous combat and of me pitching the great Jock Crimson over the rail of his own boat seemed to have burst open the gates of their imagination and made them remember thirty mothers in their town whose children had no names. Somewhere not far from me I heard the names of the Bomar boys spoken. Then they passed away on that slow wave of sound, like the sullen belts of red that the Indians used to send out among tribes when the hatchets lay uneasy in the ground.

Peace was hopeless from the beginning—a matter

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of geography. The townsmen lay between the steamer-men and their steamers; the steamer-men massed between the townsmen and the town.

A half-moon had come up to light the spectacle of a town in sickness. In its flat and ghostly light I saw the tall shadows of two schooners moving in almost imperceptibly about Long Point. The bell in the town spoke twelve—it was the morning of the eighth.

If Man'el were here now he would know what to do. Man'el's brain worked with his eye and his hand followed his brain before I would be done blinking. Man'el would have been in his element here, talking with that smooth fire of his, moving bodies of men here and there, loving the game of it, but never forgetting for an instant that he was the mover and not the pawn, while with me, as soon as I started to use my head I lost it and must go blundering off with the game-board on my shoulders. I turned these things over in my head because I was wishing that Man'el might be on board of one of those dim ships that rounded Long Point, and knowing that he would be two days away at the Georges, with no possible knowledge of what was going on in Old Harbor.

The wharf was beginning to hum again under the impact of a thousand feet. But it was not the staccato of a multitude running now, but the insistent, low grinding of heels that pushed. It was hard to say whether the mass of men about me moved until my eye went to the corner of the fishshed and measured the passage of heads disappearing into the shadow—the tail of a human ram,

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who's head had already found its mark, to judge from the rumor of yells and imprecations whining out from the shoreward.

Before I put my shoulder into the crush I turned to look once at the deck of the *Bangor*. There in the garish illumination Jock Crimson still lay, his limp legs dangling into the darkness. Allie had come down to bend over him with a drenched cloth that she pressed against his red temples. But she was not looking at him; she looked at me with an expression that it was far beyond me to fathom.

I remember the rest of that night as one recalls in fragments the business of a walking-dream. One of those fragmentary recollections is of beating my feet against the boards of the wharf for a time that never seemed to end, my head down against the back of the man in front of me, heads and arms and shoulders pressing about me, and heavy breathing, and occasional shouts muffled by the smother of bodies. I do not know how long it took, but I do know that we swept upward of three hundred steamer-men off the wharf and broke them up and drove the fragments into the back lanes.

When I came into the square at last and stood aside from the lash of the column's tail to get my breath it did surely seem that Old Harbor was the town of a dream—a ghastly, blue-lit dream. Its twisting lanes and alleys had changed to veins of turbulence, sucking in and spewing out their pulses of men gone mad with battle.

A knot of life vomited from the mouth of Siever Street, writhed for an instant at the edge of the open space, and vanished once more into the

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shadows, leaving only a fragment of itself rolling on the bright floor of the square. The fragment evolved into a very stocky man who blew and squealed like a stranded porpoise in his efforts to get his head up and his feet down. When he had accomplished this I saw that the stocky man was Dedos. He saw me at the same moment, rolled his blocky arm at me to come, and doubled back ponderously, and with vast internal rumblings, into the passage, leaving a husky message to trail over his shoulder: "Dey gone dees way, Zhoe. Come on an' get 'em."

And just because I was dreaming I did as he bade me. I ran a little way into the lane and came upon three men standing in a knot to face me. The moonlight fell upon them through a gap between two houses, lending them a blue pallor that fetched me up short in my rush, to stand there laughing weakly at them. They appeared very small and wan, and the whites of their eyes glimmered in the sheen of the moon. I waved my hand at them and ran on, looking for bigger men. I ran through alternate strips of pale light and pale shadow, past writhing and cursing couples that tore at one another, through the pelting shreds of a rout and pursuit. Men were fighting on the gravel in the middle of the lane; men were fighting, invisible, in the pits between houses; they were pounding and clawing their fellows on the stoops of houses and tangled in the nets of chicken-yards.

I ran through them all and came to the back street, but found no big men. It grew to be more than ever like a dream because of the forever-

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recurring picture of black forms diminishing as they fled. In the post-office street there were two neighbors, shipmates, hard at each other's throats in a square of shadow, and it was not till I had them apart that they looked at each other. I left them staring and bewildered, and passed down the road.

There used to be a dream of my childhood in which I seemed to walk along a corridor that had no end, illuminated from no apparent source by a dead, shadowless light. And here now was the corridor and the lifeless exhalations of the moon. Only there were shadows in post-office street. Half-way down its length I came upon a shadow that filled it from wall to wall. It was not till I had almost run into it that I perceived it to be made of men. There must have been fifty of them—one of those fragments that had been driven out of the square and not yet, for some reason, broken up into its component parts.

"Now," said I to myself—but aloud, I believe—"now I've found something that will stand up till I hit it."

One of the front rank waved a club, part of a broken oar, at me. It must have been this that struck the back of my head when I lumbered into the pack, roaring again. I thought that my head left my shoulders and flew away into a distant world of chattering and buzzing. After a while it came back, slowly at first, as if perhaps it had lost its way, then at a faster pace, till it landed on its proper spot with a staggering impact. After that I raised myself on my hands and looked about. My shadow of

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men had turned to a little swarm of bobbing backs running away as fast as they could toward the front street. There was a taste of warm salt on my lips. I got to my feet, with Old Harbor running around and around me in crazy circles, and the hands I put to my head came back all red from the kiss of that broken oar.

"Now I am going to get that fellow," I said, with conscious care to utter each word distinctly and correctly. When I had come to the end of the statement I started off at a rush, only to collide almost instantly with a fence which the whirling town had set down in my path. I stopped and spoke my sentence again, then ran on, grazing a wall and veering into a willow-tree, but gaining impetus at every stride, till I burst into the glare of the front street, a monstrous and gory portent, I have no doubt. Men, idle-handed for the moment, pointed me out wonderingly to one another and shouted words at me that I could not understand.

It must have been an hour that I ran about the neighborhood, and all that time the grim festivities were at their height. So many scores of stories about obscure battles in hidden corners have come down from that night in Old Harbor that no man can hope to keep them straight. It will always be but a blind jumble of tales, this epic of my town.

As for me, I can tell only a little of what I did. I believe it was back in the post-office street again that a man I was following hard suddenly turned and picked up a stone and threw at me. The stone

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hit my left arm a little above the elbow. Strangely enough, there was but little pain about the blow, no more than a cold shiver creeping down into my hand. But when I would have raised my arms to threaten his receding back, only my right one lifted up. I did not try to understand this phenomenon, but ran on after him, roaring louder than ever.

I had passed neighbors fighting before. Now in the back-street shadows I came upon brothers, blind and spent with their orgies, hacking feebly at one another. And in the Glen—for I went as far as the Glen—I came upon the grimmest spectacle of my life.

Dedos had picked me up just then, and we came into the Glen side by side, blowing heavily. Two hundred feet down the street a man came toward us at a shuffling trot that shook out of his lips squeal after squeal of anguish and utter horror. Behind him came a more agile pursuer, leaping against the background of light in the front street and closing in upon him at every bound.

"He squeak lek one peeg," Dedos panted in my ear. "We cut heem off here an' geeve heem to leetle feller."

And that was what he did run like—an old sow with the fear of death in her. In an instant more he would have come into the flare of the court lamp and we should see who this animal might be. He lumbered into the half-glow of the outer circle, but there the other was upon him. I have not the slightest idea but that he was out of his mind with fright and gifted with a moment of hysterical

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strength, for we saw him whirl about with a nerve-racking shriek and bury his slighter enemy almost completely out of sight in the swathing pads of his flesh. His knees knocked together and doubled under him, letting him fall to the ground with a soft thud and his prey flattened out under his mountainous form.

When we came up to him he was still screaming desperately, his eyes shut. We both knew him for Danzio, the fruit merchant. We had hard work to roll him over for a sight of the bird he had caught, because his hands hung with determination to the throat of the bird. But at last I had him loose and dragged him off with my whole arm, kicking and bleeding, into the full blaze of the light, where I laid him out to get back his senses. I heard Dedos grunt from the gloom where he remained to tend to the other one of our pair. Then he said something too low for me to catch.

"What's that?" I called to him.

"I guess he's got heem, al'righ'."

The quality of his voice more than the meaning of his words brought me up, as a tragic circumstance will often sober a drunken man. We had beaten and broken, that night, but not killed.

"Who is it?" I asked. He answered that he did not know, but would bring him into the light. I saw him emerging from the shadow, back on, with a limp, loose object at the trail in front of him. When he had come a little way into the circle he let go his grip and stepped one side, for his shadow had been upon the thing. I looked at the face that lay lolling there. Then I looked away, trying to

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tell myself dispassionately that my eyes had played me a trick—a horrible trick that rocked the world under my feet for an awful instant. I could not bring myself to look down again. I turned toward Dedos, and there he was, staring at me with dilated pupils, as though he were seeing a ghost.

So my eyes had not played me that grim trick, after all. It was the two Danzios who lay in the glare of the court lamp—fat Gabriel, and Jamie, who looked so much like his mother.

From up and down the Glen men were coming to see why we stood so peaceably in the light. They crowded in a ring about us, staring down and pointing with their fingers. The pain of wounds grew all over me. My head was too tired to think any more. I could not understand why I should hear a sound of wild song from the front street, for men had not been singing that night. I stumbled out through the thickening circle and down the reeling street, and still the notes of men's singing persisted before me and grew in volume and tangled themselves with the tramp of feet. It seemed that no matter where I might go this night, forever I was thrust back upon my boyhood: here were men caroling the song that little Man'el and I used to sing together when the tide before my father's house was running with the blood of sunset:

*Menina bonita,
Posta a ganella,
A mao de esparela,
A quem na vai ver,
Tra lara, lara . . .*

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For the last time that night I was starting to go home. I came into the front street, rolling like a man in his cups, turned to the westward, and brought up face to face with the singing men.

It was Man'el, my brother—or it seemed in my half-dream to be Man'el—slim, lithe, handsome, strong and weak Man'el. He had on his soft hat and his smooth-pressed clothes; he walked with the swing of a cavalier, and behind his back came the crews of those two cloud-vessels I had marked off Long Point, fifty men, marching jauntily.

Man'el hailed me.

"Hy, Joe! Come as soon's we could—in time to do the cleanin', I guess."

Then he had come up to me and halted, with a burlesque word of command to his rollicking army.

"I see their smoke off Monumoy day before yesterday, and I knowed they was bound here, sure as you're alive—but they wasn't any wind. Where's Allie?"

"Gone." I was so sick that I hardly cared to tell him even that. He looked at me with an abrupt and puzzled seriousness—one of his peculiar qualities.

"Johnnie Sousa told me. I met him up-street," he said.

I had nothing to say to this, for he and his men and the street and the moon were beginning to go round again in a sweeping, slow circle. His voice came to me, muffled by great distance:

"My God! Joe, you're all cut to pieces."

He reached out and grabbed my hand, the left

S T O R M

one. I remember screaming at the fire that scorched my arm. Then the wheeling world spun up and up into the blackening sky. And I was conscious that I started to fall, but never knew when I struck the ground.

XXV

I WAKE IN THE NIGHT

THEY tell me now that I lay dead for a time, and then came back to burn through days and days and nights and nights with fever. The doctor will have it that I must have run about the streets, a huge and bleeding apparition, for upward of an hour, with a hole the size of a half-dollar in the back of my skull. I have to take these things on the word of others.

Here is one thing, however, that I will put forward for the doctors to handle over. All that time, which might have been the tail of a second or the bulk of a century, although my spirit was as dead as a spirit may be, yet I was forever conscious of being in pain.

After so long a time I began to dream. It seemed that I lay in my own bed at Dedos's house, and that some one had bound my arms and legs and body about with innumerable soft cords, so that I could not move so much as a finger, no matter how I tried. It was morning in my dream, for there was a spot of sunlight on the gable of Rummy Veeder's house that came between the chimneys of the roof above my head. At first it seemed that no one was in the room, but I could say this only for

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the half-circle in which my eyes moved, for I could not lift my head. After a time that might have been very long or very short the chamber began to fill with figures, more and more of them, till the walls were hidden from sight by them. The strange thing was that all these figured persons were alike, and all were Allison Snow. They made up an unspeakably beauteous company, those shadowy loves of mine. I summoned all my flickering will to stand behind my eyes, but still I could not see the faces of that bright troop through the glamorous mists. Their weightless hands smoothed the edges of my bed; they spoke to me in soundless chorus, telling me that they loved me with such a love as had never been, telling me sweet, intimate things that I cannot so much as guess at in remembrance because they belong to those avenues of the mind which a man in his reason may never pass along.

I lay there in the warm vapors and watched them go away, one by one, till I was alone in the room again and must go away again, myself, into the black spaces.

My first conscious memory is of waking in the night and seeing a candle near the bed in my own room. I thought I would call for some one to come, but in my lassitude I put it off and put it off, till the time for it had passed by and I drowsed and slept.

Then I woke again. It was late afternoon, with a ribbon of sunshine crawling upon the wall opposite my bed. I lay quiet for a while, my mind as empty and clean as a baby's. There is an instant in the morning when one has no past. Then it

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comes back in fragments, bolts flying at one from every corner of the chamber, till at last one has them all gathered in and may stretch and get up. I had been asleep a long, long time, and so those fragments came back to me more reluctantly. Strangely, I remembered little things first—that I had just returned from a cruise, a “high trip.” Then I wondered where my dog might be—and remembered. And then another fragment of my past bowled at me—the great fight—and my virgin and colorless world had so soon turned dark and troubled and intricate. For fast on the heels of the fight I remembered that my life had lost the thing upon which I had spent all the energy of my heart and squandered all my store of hope. And then I would have slipped back into the shadows if the wish would have carried me. It was so bitter to wonder where she might be now, with her new love.

Some one had come to the side of my bed. Perhaps it was a wisp of that dream I had had trailing through the channels of my mind that made me afraid to look up for a moment. When I finally turned my eyes I saw the Handkerchief Lady’s girl standing over me with a glass of water in her hand and an expression of startled gladness in her eyes to find me come back.

“Joe,” she whispered.

“What is it, Agnes?” I said. And then she knew, and tiptoed off to tell Dedos, but would not let the heavy man come in, as I heard through the half-open door.

The sun went away, and I slept. Morning came, and I awoke and lay awake a great part of the day.

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The house was always very quiet, even when little Johnnie Bangs, whose father had given me pills before I was out of dresses, came in to sit by me and hold my wrist and talk the patter of his new doctorhood.

The following day old Dedos was allowed to pass the door. He stood there before me, blushing like a girl of fourteen, teetering from one monstrous foot to the other. It seems the big numbskull had been overcome by embarrassment at the last moment, even after he had rehearsed with his wife the meager words of greeting he was allowed, and had to be shoved into the room in the end. His rehearsal had gone for nothing. He stood and stared at me with a foolish grin on his face for a full five minutes, I should say, and then in desperation blurted at me:

"You done heem up, Zhoe. You done heem up fine—great."

After that he ran off the stage like a child on declamation day, forgetting his bow. Agnes brought in the children softly for a moment that afternoon. And all these visitors I met with as sturdy a smile as I might manage, telling them that I was happy and well. It was through the hours when no one was about that I lay there hugging the aching truth close to me, asking myself time after time what I was to do with myself now. Something said I ought to be a man about it, at any rate, and another something answered that when I was so weak I might be as low a coward as I would.

Darkness came early that evening because an

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easterly air had covered us up in a fog. Far and far away I could hear the whistle of the Race moaning about it, and nearer at hand the chatter of a surf that was making up on our own beach. I went to sleep after the rain had commenced to patter on the shingles.

I do not know what time of night it was when I opened my eyes. A candle was burning beside my bed, but below the edge, so that its flare should not fall in my eyes. No one in the world but Allison Snow was kneeling there, looking down in my face. Her own was white and hollow-cheeked, with wide, tired eyes. The light from below brought out the worn contours of the cords at the base of her neck, where the flimsy garment thrown over her night-clothes fell open a little.

"She must have been very sick," I said to myself.

Then I made another observation.

"She has not been so happy for a year as she is now."

I was extremely deliberate in turning these things over. That would keep my mind busy until I was prepared to understand. She was dreaming so that she had not marked that my eyes were open. She lifted one of her hands and pretended to smooth my brow, but without touching it. It was then that she must have seen, for she half rose, with a quick intaking of breath and startled eyes.

"Oh, I must go!" I heard her whisper.

But she did not go; only crouched there and looked into my eyes that looked back into hers. I do not know how long we remained so, crying to each other in that wordless speech, reaching out to

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each other with that touchless caress. At last she took in a long, quivering breath and let her head sink, face buried, in the pillow beside my head. There she lay and sobbed and sobbed, so long a time that I cried to her to tell me the matter; begged her in God's name to let me know why she was so unhappy. But all she would answer me was that she must go, that she had stayed too long, and the like of that, smothered by the linen.

After a while, for all I could say, she slipped out of the room, leaving me to begin the rebuilding of my castles by the wavering flame of the candle she had left behind. And all the monstrous wind that boomed over the roofs out-of-doors could not shake a stone of that building, laid without a question of how it came to be there.

The next day the doctor found a little return of fever, which made him wrinkle up his forehead wisely, but not wisely enough to know that that fever was a covenant that I should never be ill any more. When Agnes came in I said to her, without preliminary:

"Why was Allie here last night?"

"She's been here most of the hours every night," she answered, with that queerly made smile of hers.

"And days, at first," she added.

"I want to see her now," I demanded.

"She has gone out for a walk; I made her go." She turned away with a hint of finality, and I knew I could get no more from her then.

"Will you tell me where Man'el is?" I asked her.

"He sailed away day before yesterday," she said,

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“as soon as he knew you’d come back. Now you must stop talking.”

It was two weeks from that day that they would have let me walk as far as the beach on Dedos’s arm. But when they opened the door Shank Painter was crowded to the fences with men and women and children waiting to see me, and so I could not go. The next day they slipped me out and back again before folks were up from their dinners.

XXVI

I WATCH THE SHIPS GO BY AND HEAR A STORY

THERE came a day when Allie's arm was strong enough for me, and we could go as far as the last dune that looks away over the salt-marshes and the rim of sand which makes a neck for Long Point, and beyond that the stretch of water which hardly knows whether it is bay or ocean. Here the vessels go back and forth so close inshore that from the dune they appear like orphaned clumps of rigging walking slowly and sedately along the rim of sand.

We sat on the blueberry turf near the top of the hill and watched them go by for a long while, with no other words than the names I gave the passing craft. Somehow we both knew that when we came to speech we would have to break a certain silence that was as old now as the seventh of October. For in all this time of my mending I had never asked her a question; and she, knowing me better than any one else will ever know me, understood that I was not yet ready to know why she had gone away from me and why she had come back.

It was one of those mid-autumn days which I can describe only as spacious. It is one of the catch-words of our civilization that the world is

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a small place, but from the top of an Old Harbor hill on one of those days it seems a tremendous, big world, after all. A vast number of little clouds, huddled about the horizons, multiplied the immensity of the chamber of the sky by the very insignificance of its furnishings. The marshes stretching away below us appeared to have borrowed magnitude from the void overhead, and the wavering tide-channels became the threads of mighty and populous rivers, their further ends veiled by their own luminous breathings.

"Sweetheart," I said, my hand stretched out to the westward, where a toy schooner, far out and clear of the sand, came sailing free for the Race—"sweetheart, there's the *Rose Dorothy*, and now I'll see Man'el."

"Man'el," Allie repeated after me, but as if to herself. "Man'el—Joe, do you know anything in the world about your brother?"

"Sometimes I think I do, and sometimes I'm sure I do not, sweetheart. What makes you ask that now?"

"Because I've always had a kind of feeling against Man'el—as though—oh, as though he didn't just want you to have—things—" She faltered for an instant only, then, shaming her own shame—"to have *me*."

"Oh, my sweetheart!" was all I could say. But she was not waiting for any words of mine.

"And then when I saw him coming out along the wharf that morning," she went on, not looking at me, "why, somehow I knew there was a different part of Man'el. You don't know what he did—they

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haven't told you. It was just when the sky was getting gray before sunrise that I saw him coming out along the wharf with his hands in his pockets and whistling. I was standing before the wheel-house on that—that steamer—and there were crowds of men, some of them with bloody faces and broken arms, all watching him from the decks. I wanted to cry to him to go back or they would kill him, but I was so terribly weak that my voice sounded like a whisper. When he came out to the end of the wharf he stopped and looked around at the steamers, just as calm—you know that smooth, calm way of his—just as calm as if there weren't four or five hundred men there raging to pick him to pieces. 'Where's this Crimson fellow's ship?' I heard him ask one of them, a big man with his ear hanging half off and a gaff in his hands. And all that man did was to start polishing the gaff and nod toward the *Bangor*. Man'el stepped aboard, and nobody touched him. He sat on the rail looking them over and whistling to the end of his tune. 'Where's this Crimson fellow?' he asked next, and two of them nodded up at the state-room. Well, Joe, he didn't hurry a step—he just sauntered around to the ladder as if he owned the ship, came up and banged open the door and stepped in—you see, I had come in the moment before, because I had heard Jock—" She broke off there, with a catch at the end of the word, which she had never spoken to me before.

My right hand was lying on my knee. She bent over, took it up in both of hers, and kissed the palm of it, pressing it fiercely over her lips.

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"I heard *him* calling," she went on. "All night I had been bathing his head and trying to keep him out straight and easy, and when he was wild I'd had two or three of the men in to help me. So now he wanted a drink, and I was getting it for him when Man'el opened the door. And, Joe, your brother just stood there with his hands in his pockets and laughed and laughed.

"'I see you're keeping house all cozy,' he said after a while. Then he went on laughing harder than ever. Jock had gotten himself up on one arm. I never saw such a look on a man's face as there was on his face—where you could see it through the bandages. He raved at Man'el till the blood began to run out under the clothes.

"'What yoo doin' here, yoo—?' He called him a frightful name.

"'I come to get the girl,' Man'el answered him, still grinning.

"That was too much for Jock. He tried to yell something, but he fainted before he could get it out and fell back in the bunk. Man'el made some joke about his being a sound sleeper and then asked me if I was coming along. I just pointed at the bunk and shook my head, thinking he would understand that I must stay and take care of him while he was like that.

"'So Joe didn't spoil him enough to change your ideas?' he said then.

"'Oh, Man'el,' I cried, 'can't you see?'

"'Can't I see what?' he asked. He didn't give me time to tell him, but snapped his fingers and lifted his shoulders and said: 'Never mind, it

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doesn't matter to anybody now. It doesn't bother this man Crimson, because he's taking a nap, and it doesn't matter to you or me, because you and I don't care about anything in the world. It doesn't matter to Joe, because he's dead.'

"'Man'el,' I said, 'what are you talking about?' I can remember, Joe, I had my hands up in front of me as if I were praying. But he stood shrugging his shoulders and giving me the queerest grinning look. It seemed to me if I could only make him speak, somehow, he would say it different. I ran to him and took hold of his shoulders and patted them and begged him: 'Man'el, Man'el, what did you say?'

"'Allie,' he laughed at me, 'don't try and make a fool of me—just because you've done it to two men already. It's so hard on the fool, Allie.'

"Oh, Joe, I had been thinking about it all that night—but I was the one who was the fool—a little, shivering wisp of a fool who had to have men killed before she could see—that right isn't always right.

"But I didn't let go of his shoulders until he swore and pushed me off. He wasn't laughing any more. He'd gotten pale and snarling and bitter. I felt as if there wasn't anything to hold me up—Oh, my Joe, I never understood till that minute that you were the only real thing in my world, the one person always there when I turned. I don't know whether Man'el kicked at me or not when I was on the floor, but he was bitter enough to have done it. I wouldn't have cared if he had kicked me in the face, because I heard his voice above me

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saying that he wasn't sure you were dead, and how you had fallen in the street and been carried home senseless. Oh, Joe, Joe, Joe—"

She broke off once more and sat for a few moments silent, her fingers interlocked and tugging. When she went on again she spoke more steadily.

"I told him to take me to you quickly.

"“Oh, you've decided to go, have you?” he sneered at me. ‘Hadn't you better put on your nice hat and cloak?’ But I didn't listen to him. I opened the door and tugged at his arm. I wanted him to come, because I was afraid the men would stop me—there was a big crowd of them from all the steamers on our deck looking up at the door. There is surely something queer about Man'el. He walked down through them with me behind, and he never seemed to know they were there—as if they were so many dogs afraid of a switch. When we were on the wharf some of them followed after us, without seeming to know what to do, till they saw Man'el's men at the shore end, and then they stopped—and—I came on to you.”

So there I had it. Three schooners slid along the sandy causeway in stately procession. I watched them come to the Race and, one after another, curtsey, flutter, and stand away on the new tack for Peaked Hill. The leader of the three was the *Arbitrator*, with Dedos in the skipper's berth. I became aware of Allie's eyes fixed upon my face. But still I stared at those clumps of sails and the water beyond and the little wind-clouds fighting about the sky-line. I was very happy because she had come back, and I felt that any shadow that

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fell upon my happiness would be the shadow of a traitor. I was very happy—ah, but I had not wanted her to come back because I was sick. I knew no more now than I had known before. Why had she gone away?—because she loved another better? She had not told me no. There. For all I could do, the traitor had stood up to cast his shadow.

She saw that shadow just as plainly as though it lay on the ground at her feet. It was as hard for Allie Snow to talk as it was for me, but she had known that this time was coming inexorably to meet her.

"Joe," she broke out, "do you know how much Jock Crimson paid for me?"

"Paid—for—you—"

It was so terribly hard for me to think.

"Yes, paid for me in money. Almost a thousand dollars, Joe."

I reached out and grasped her shoulder, turned her roughly to face me.

"How—what do you mean?"

"He has given it to father for us to live on. That's how he has paid for me."

She rushed on.

"Have you ever wondered how Big Sam could afford to build that fine house on Pink Hill? Have you ever seen Seth Adams spending more money than he ever could earn in his life? Have you ever wondered, Joe, why my father was never locked up, like Will Hemans and Charlie Young? I will tell you. It was because Will Hemans and Charlie Young were not rich men—and because they had

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no friend to arrange things—with Big Sam and Asa Nickerson and the rest—”

“Wait,” I said. I wanted to think. “On the night your father was taken I saw Crimson and Asa Nickerson talking together in an alley.”

“Yes. He had started then. What he did through that night neither of us will ever know—who he coaxed or bullied or threatened. He has never spoken of it—to me. He’s never said a word about the whole thing—never—not even on the boat, when—well, just never. I didn’t even know he was giving my father the money till this summer. You remember the night when he came to the house—and—you saw us in the doorway? Joe, dearest, I could have died then and been glad of it.”

Her head was down between her shielding hands, and she shivered. My own hands were clenched so that the nails left white marks on the palms when I had opened them again. Jock Crimson, my enemy, and he had been so much better than I. This was the thing that made me tear my palms.

“He always told me he was going to take me away some day,” Allie went on, without raising her face. “It was so hard to fight him, always and always and over and over—you can’t know, Joe. Whenever the fleet came here he came to the house and gave my father money, and my father told me it was the income from some property in Gloucester that nobody knew about but himself and Jock. Jock was ‘ministering’ it—that’s what my father told me, and that’s what I believed. No, Jock never played upon it; perhaps if he had, it would have been a fairer fight. He only came to me as if

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it were his right. It was hard to fight him—the splendid animal, with his hot blood, the joy he took in moving and breathing, his roars of laughter when I tried to keep away from him. Oh, it made me so tired—so tired.

“And then people began to notice and talk—everybody, it seems to me, but you. Man’el knew. Do you remember the time we went out toward the Race and sat on the hill and saw the steamers coming in? The night before that Man’el had been throwing Jock in my face. I told him the truth, and he wouldn’t believe it—”

“I thought you were talking about me,” I said.

“I wondered—when I saw Tim there.”

“I have been very dumb.”

“Yes, Joe. Or one without suspicion. You and Crinon are alike in some ways. Man’el is different. Man’el would have guessed long ago that Agnes was my sister. And I—I could never tell you about Jock. I’ve tried to make you know many times. But you never knew. You only realized that I was troubled, and that made you sad. You beat your hands against it—you cried out with a tight mouth.

“That night when you saw us standing in the doorway, my father had just blurted out in anger because I would not let Jock kiss me, that he, Jock, had kept us alive for the past year—screamed at me the very number of dollars and cents Jock had given us—*given* us. If you could know how I felt then—how ashamed I was, and how utterly weary, and how just at that moment I didn’t care what happened! I looked at Jock and hated him, and yet he seemed like a sort of refuge where I’d

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never have to be tired again. And then he had paid for me—and my father was not in prison. Oh, I didn't care—I didn't care. I wanted to be through with everything and go away and forget and rest—*rest*. Just for a moment I cared—when I saw you standing there by the gate. I had a crazy idea that you were going to rush up, grab me by the shoulders, shake me, cry out that there was no such thing as gratitude, tell me I was a fool, tell me that right was what you wished right to be and wrong what you made it. Oh, Joe— But then, you could not know. And you went away. There was another time when I wanted you to say that—”

“I know,” I broke in, bitterly. “It was when we stood in the Ide girls’ kitchen and I said ‘good night.’”

“Yes, in the Ide girls’ kitchen, where I had run because I didn’t see you—then I would have had to fight again—as I did. But you did say it—you did say it—in the end.”

“When?”

“The instant after Crimson did that terrible thing to Tim. The look that came into your eyes then seemed to snap a cord that had been growing tighter and tighter about my brain for months. Then just at that moment I knew that everything would be right, no matter what should happen. Oh, if I could only have known sooner, perhaps I would not have killed five men that night—because I killed them—even Jamie Danzio—and my own father.”

She stared straight ahead for a minute, with

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wistful lines at the corners of her mouth and strands of her brown hair (she had parted it) blowing down over the trouble on her brow. Then I drew her head down against my shoulder and held my hand over her eyes and kissed her hair.

"Oh, Joe, I love you so very much!" she whispered.

"While we were still in the crowd," she went on, after a little, "I tried to make Jock understand that everything was changed, but there was so much noise and jostling that I couldn't. When we came aboard he led me up to the state-room. He was in a terrible hurry to get out on the wharf again, but he took time to turn at the door and ask me to kiss him. I drew back into a corner, shaking my head. He couldn't understand; then he thought I was tired and nervous.

"What's the matter?" he asked. 'Got the shivers?'

"Jock," I said, 'I've got to go back ashore. There's been a mistake.' He laughed at me, with his head back and his mouth wide. Then he came and took hold of me so hard I thought he would snap my arms. He patted my head and told me to lie down and rest, that I'd feel better after a little.

"I got a piece of business with a friend of yours," he told me, 'and I can't keep him waiting.' He had been holding me: now it was I who held him from going out of the door.

"Listen—please listen," I cried to him. Then I tried to explain things, but they were all so twisted and jumbled that it only made him curious.

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He sat down on the bunk and asked me to go slower. Oh, Joe, how awful he looked! Just the sight of his red skin made me creep. I was deathly afraid of him, and I hated him more than you could ever hate him. I stood up before him and dug my nails into the palms of my hands, saying over and over to myself: 'I must make him see—I must make him see.' Then I told him the whole thing again, trying with every little bit of me to pick out the words I meant. After a while I saw him turning from curiosity to anger; that frightened me more than ever, because I had never seen him angry in all the time I had known him. He reached out for my arm and spoke so low that it made me want to scream. 'In my country, when a man's woman gets this way, the man beats her. That makes her well again.' He raised his head and listened, and I heard the wharf outside booming. The booming grew louder and louder.

"'I wish you would beat me—I wish to God you'd beat me to death,' I cried. He was up and at the door.

"'I'll do that, and I'll do it damned quick if I catch you outside of this door,' he said to me, in the same low voice. 'Now I've got to attend to that friend of yours.' He went out and closed the door. I know he held it shut, because I pushed and pounded at it. You couldn't hear me, but I was calling to you. I waited then a minute or so. When I tried again the door opened and I came out."

There was another silence now.

"You won't mind if I—if we don't think about the next little while, will you, Joe?"

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“And afterward?”

“Afterward I didn’t know what to do. I was so frightened of all those men on the decks. And yet I knew I couldn’t leave that man bleeding there, and the others seemed afraid to do anything for him. All the rest of the night I took care of him, and I never once thought of being ashamed of my happiness. I was happy and frightened by turns, for every now and then I heard the men out on deck saying that they had better be getting under way. Then they’d argue about it, keeping me hot and cold for ten minutes at a time—whether they should go and leave all their mates ashore. We knew what was going on in the town, from the yells and screams that never died away. Once, when I thought they were surely going to throw off the lines, I ran out and called to them that the captain was dying and they must be quiet. At that they left off, and I had time to be happy again. I’ll never know what would have come of it all if Man’el hadn’t done what he did.”

The little army of clouds along the western skyline had been signaling wind for an hour. Now it began to whisper its coming for itself, making sudden and erratic arrowheads of gray on the green expanse of the marshes. All the vessels had trooped out of sight, one way or the other. A finger of vapor in the west reached up and turned the sun red, and with that all the tide-channels became myriad and labyrinthine veins of blood-marble patterning the pavement of the spacious world. We might have been in a cathedral, and the thin, prolonged note of the *Diadem*, whistling

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for bait away across the hills, the scream of an organ-pipe disturbed by some attendant's dusting-cloth.

Allie turned to me, lifting her hands, palms upward.

"And now, my Joe, you have it all."

We walked back slowly, cutting along the margin of the tide-grass and through between two hummocks till we struck into Shank Painter road.

"I was out here that night," I said.

"I know it," she replied. "Every child in Old Harbor knows just where you were every moment of that night—you have no idea, Joe, what a great hero they have made of you."

And I said:

"I don't remember any time in my life when I was less of a hero than the night of the seventh of October."

THE END



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